

3

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES



RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The Family Law Act 1975 requires the Australian Institute of Family Studies to conduct and coordinate research to develop understanding of the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia.

Over the year, the Institute's research activities have been guided by the *Research Plan 2002–2005* and the new *Research Plan 2006–2008*.

OVERVIEW

During this year the *Research Plan 2002–2005* was completed and a new *Research Plan 2006–2008* developed. In developing the new research plan, an extensive program of formal and informal consultations was undertaken in all Australian states and territories and in major cities and regional centres. More than 200 representatives from local, state and Australian Government departments, universities, peak bodies and community sector organisations attended the consultations. Development work commenced on new projects that will give effect to the new directions that are flagged in the research plan.

In December 2005, the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transitions: Legislative, Practical and Policy Responses was held at Parliament House in Canberra. This event brought together leading family law experts and key stakeholders in Australia and overseas to discuss issues and exchange ideas around cutting edge strategies and programs for supporting families through family transitions – particularly relationship change. In essence, the forum sought to draw out best practice and lessons learned in different countries, and to promote opportunities for an ongoing exchange of ideas of mutual interest in the areas of research, policy and practice.

The Institute has developed a number of new projects related to the family law system. These include studies into allegations of violence in the context of family law proceedings, a family law data mapping project which will identify the nature of family law data collected by various agencies, and experiences of parents and children after Family Court decisions about relocation (the latter of which involves a collaboration with the ANU Faculty of Law – the lead agency). The Institute also designed a series of surveys to collect baseline data on families' experiences and attitudes towards seeking assistance with relationships, use of services and experiences of the family law system prior to the introduction of the Family Law Reform Package on 1 July 2006. A survey of lawyers' attitudes towards the new family system was also conducted.

Understanding the impact of Australia's unique social and cultural environment on the next generation of Australians is crucial to our future. *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* is designed to provide this information. Until the establishment of LSAC, Australia was one of the few OECD countries without such a large-scale longitudinal study. Following the release of the first wave of data in 2005, there has been a growing body of conference papers and published research papers using the LSAC data. Completion of design of Wave 2 and commencement of the fieldwork was an important milestone achieved this year.

The National Child Protection Clearinghouse and the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault were productive. Usage of the clearinghouses by practitioners and policy makers continues to increase and publications on a wide range of topics have been produced. The Institute was awarded funding to establish two new clearinghouses this year: the Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse and the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA).

Other contract funding to undertake research in a wide range of areas was obtained this year. Funding was received from the Department of Families, Community

Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Attorney-General’s Department, the Australian Council for Children and Parenting and the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia. Some of the areas in which new contracts were won include work and family, family law, child protection, sexual assault and families caring for someone with a disability.

Structure of the research program

The Institute’s research program focuses on four themes: family relationships; children, youth and patterns of care; families and work; and families and community life. The research program is also responsible for monitoring and analysing social and demographic trends.

Project	Institute-initiated (I) or Commissioned (C)	Collaborators	Research themes			
			Family relationships	Children, youth and patterns of care	Families and work	Families and Community Life
Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse	C (FaCSIA)		✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)	C (FaCSIA)	8 research organisations	✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Australian Temperament Project	Joint funding: ARC, AIFS	Prof. Prior, Prof. Oberklaid, Assoc. Prof. Sanson and Assoc. Prof. Toumbourou	✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓
Family Trends and Transitions	I		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
The Case for Marriage in Australia	I		✓✓			
Building Healthy Couple Relationships	I		✓✓	✓	✓	✓
Decisions on Having Children	I		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Family and Work Decisions Project	I		✓	✓✓	✓✓	
Parents on Low Income	I		✓	✓	✓✓	
Work and Family Interactions	I		✓	✓	✓✓	
Family Law Monitoring and Evaluation	I		✓✓	✓✓		
Allegations of Violence	C (Attorney-General's Dept)		✓✓	✓✓		

Project	Institute-initiated (I) or Commissioned (C)	Collaborators	Research themes			
			Family relationships	Children, youth and patterns of care	Families and work	Families and Community Life
Understanding Contact Disputes	C (Attorney-General's Dept)	Sydney Law School, University of Sydney	✓✓	✓✓	✓	
Family Law Data Mapping Project	C (Attorney-General's Dept)	Australian Social Science Data Archives, ANU	✓			
The Experiences of Parents and Children after Family Court Decisions about Relocation	ARC	College of Law, ANU	✓✓	✓✓		
Caring for Children after Parental Separation	I		✓✓	✓✓	✓	
Families in the Asian Region	Jointly with FaCSIA		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓
Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault	C (FaCSIA)		✓			✓✓
National Child Protection Clearinghouse	C (FaCSIA)		✓	✓✓		✓
Communities and Families Clearinghouse	C (FaCSIA)		✓	✓		✓✓
National Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy	C (FaCSIA)	Social Policy Research Centre, UNSW	✓	✓		✓✓
Children and Family Life	I		✓	✓✓	✓	
Indigenous Out-of-Home care	C (ACCAP, via FaCSIA)	SNAICC		✓✓		✓
Understanding Child Protection Data	C (CSMAC)			✓		
National Comparison of Child Protection Systems	C (CSMAC)			✓		
Research Utilisation	C (Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia)	Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia		✓✓		
✓✓ Indicates theme or themes to which the project is most relevant. ✓ Indicates theme or themes to which the project has some relevance.						

The Institute's program of research is based upon three broad principles: rigour, relevance and responsiveness that underpin the selection of research topics, design and conduct of the research and communication of the results. Some of the Institute's research is Institute-initiated, while other research is commissioned or contracted. Institute-initiated research is generally funded from the annual appropriation from Parliament. The principles apply equally to all Institute research, regardless of the funding sources.

Rigour

The Institute aims to undertake research that is of a high quality, credible and provides a solid evidence-base. This requires that the research takes account of the latest theoretical developments, and adopts the most appropriate methodologies. The Institute employs a range of research methods.

Relevance

The Institute's research program should involve research that is relevant to the development of national policy interests, both currently and on an emerging basis. It should also be relevant to academic researchers, and to the interests and needs of the general community. This includes research that addresses issues affecting families in a wide range of social and economic situations across Australia. It is important that much of the work is at the forefront of science and there is a role for research that does not inform current policy in an immediate and obvious way, but that is instrumental in setting the future policy agendas. The research should be useful, timely and provide value for money.

Responsiveness

The Institute's research program should be responsive to the policy environment. To achieve these goals, the Institute will be consultative in the development of new research projects; form partnerships and other collaborative relationships; seek external review of new projects and publications; and communicate clearly to the target audience.

Types of research

While some of the research will involve the development of new datasets, other work will be based on further analyses of those that already exist. An important development in family research in Australia has been the establishment of large-scale longitudinal surveys. The Institute is at the forefront of this advance, being responsible for the development and management of *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC)* and being one of three partners in the consortium conducting the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. The Institute is also responsible for the Australian Temperament Project (ATP), a longitudinal survey of Victorian children, now in its 23rd year. These and other existing datasets, including those developed by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, represent valuable resources for research on Australian families.

It is important that international research findings and policy solutions are not imported uncritically to Australia. Nevertheless, international developments will continue to be analysed and reviewed in order to identify lessons for Australia. The Institute also helps support research undertaken in other countries, especially in the Asian region.

Quality management and ethics approvals

All research publications are subject to wide internal and expert external review, and stakeholder consultation improves the relevance of the research undertaken and ensures that the questions addressed are the key questions. All research

articles in the Institute's journal *Family Matters* are subject to full peer review prior to acceptance for publication. The journal is classified by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) as a fully refereed journal.

All research projects conducted by the Institute need to meet the ethical standards outlined in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*, and elaborated in the Institute's ethics statement, *Ethical Issues in the Research Process* (1996). In 2005–2006, the Ethics Committee reviewed several projects either via the expedited review process and during face-to-face meetings of the Committee as conforming to the relevant ethics requirements (see Ethics Committee in Chapter 2 of this Annual Report).

The Committee considered and approved the following research projects:

- Understanding Contact Disputes
- Experiences of Parents and Children after Family Court Decisions about Relocation – Relocation Disputes Project Part 1
- Evaluation of Relationships Australia Victoria FUN for Kids program
- Amendment of Research Proposal for Relationship Australia Victoria FUN for Kids Program Evaluation
- New Procedures for Wave 2 of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children
- Questionnaire and Implementation Phase of the Family Study
- The Pilot study and Wave 1 of Stronger Families in Australia (The Family Study)
- Family Violence Project
- Research Utilisation Project
- Phase 2 Telephone Survey of the Research Utilisation Project
- Evaluation of Family Law Reforms
- Best Practice Models in Out-of-Home Care.

In March, the Ethics Committee prepared a submission to the National Health and Medical Research Council on the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research Second Round Consultation Feedback.

In April, the Ethics Committee responded to the Survey of Human Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) conducted by Health Outcomes International on behalf of the Victorian Department of Human Services.

No complaints were received from study participants regarding ethics aspects of Institute research during the reporting period.

Publishing and dissemination

A key role of the Institute as identified in its Strategic Plan 2006–2008 is to ensure that research is disseminated widely and effectively in various formats to a range of stakeholders.

The research of the Institute has been published in Institute research reports, newsletters, issues papers, *Family Matters* articles, articles in academic journals and book chapters. Outputs from Institute research have been widely disseminated at conferences in Australia and overseas. Papers have been presented in most states

and territories of Australia. There has been considerable reporting of the Institute's research in radio, television and print media, particularly on issues about child abuse and neglect, family trends, parenting after separation, parent–adolescent relationships, sexual assault issues, work and family life, mother's labour force participation and work hour preferences, fertility, marriage and divorce, and child custody.

All of these, as well as conference presentations and other forms of written outputs, are listed in the Summary of Research Project Performance (Chapter 4).

National research priorities

The Prime Minister announced Australia's first set of National Research Priorities in December 2002. These provide a vision of how research can contribute to Australia's prosperity and wellbeing, enhance the quality and impact of research by building critical mass in priority areas, and promote collaboration between research organisations and with industry.

The Institute's research falls mainly under priority area 2: Promoting Good Health and Wellbeing For All Australians, in particular, under the goal of strengthening Australia's social and economic fabric.

In 2005–2006, the Institute provided a report to the Chief Scientist against its 2004–2005 implementation plan. In early 2006, the Institute received a very gratifying report from the National Research Priorities Standing Committee. They noted that "AIFS conducts research, disseminates research findings, and contributes to Government Policy, on factors affecting family stability and wellbeing in Australia, and AIFS is commended for its integration of the NRPs in its research framework. The inclusion of the goal of 'Strengthening Australia's Social and Economic Fabric' has resulted in a greater share of AIFS' research falling within the NRPs. Overall, the Committee commends the work of the Institute in contributing to the NRPs and building research collaboration."

Broad involvement in policy processes

Parliamentary submissions

During the year the Institute's research staff prepared a number of cross-program submissions to parliamentary inquiries. These are listed in Table 3.1.

Consultations

The Institute maintains a consultative role with individual, government and non-government bodies. Staff conduct these consultations, either individually or as members of planning or advisory teams, to inform others of the Institute's research and research findings, and to provide advice on existing family research or on formulating research in areas not well covered by existing data. Such consultation is an indication of the Institute's involvement in the policy process.

In the reporting period, consultation covering many broad issues took place between all Institute research programs and representatives of various international and national organisations or bodies (Table 3.2).

Visitors

In 2005–2006, a number of academics and representatives of government and non-government bodies from within and outside Australia met with Institute researchers to exchange ideas on a range of issues of relevance to each of the Institute's research programs. These visits provide the opportunity for the Institute to learn of the work of other researchers, share its own research findings, and help meet its objective of achieving and maintaining its place as a centre of excellence for research on family wellbeing (Table 3.2).

External representation

In addition to conference and workshop papers presented by staff, Institute staff were invited to participate and share their expertise at workshops organised by government and non-government bodies, and universities. Similarly, Institute staff attended and represented the Institute at various national and international conferences as part of the staff development and training program (Table 3.2).

Representation on expert panels

A number of Institute researchers were invited to serve as external reviewers for academic journals, including: *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*; *Child Abuse & Neglect*; and *Children Australia*, and to serve on editorial boards of academic journals such as *Threshold*; *Journal of Family Studies*; *Child Maltreatment*; *Communities, Children & Families Australia* and *Journal of Religion & Abuse: Pastoral Care & Prevention*.

Researchers were also invited to share their expertise on steering committees, advisory committees, expert panels, and government reference groups. The Institute was represented on various committees of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) such as the Personal Safety Survey; the General Social Survey Reference Group; Children and Youth Information Development Plan and the Family Statistics

Table 3.1 Parliamentary submissions 2005–2006

Child protection

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, August). Submission on *Development of a charter of rights for children and young people in care: A discussion paper*. Advocate for Children in Care, Victorian Department of Human Services.

Child protection

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, September). Submission on Victorian child protection exposure draft legislation.

Child protection

Higgins, D. J. (2005, October). Submission to the Australian Bureau of Statistics on Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) 2005 Personal Safety Survey.

Family law

Smyth, B., Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2006, 27 April). Confidential submission on Relocation after Separation to the Family Law Council.

Family law

Smyth, B., & Moloney, L. (2006, February). Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee Inquiry into the provisions of the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005.

Advisory Group. Several staff members also sit on a number of advisory committees and reference groups, including: the, Stronger Families and Communities Strategy Partnership; the Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project; Queensland Department of Child Safety; CSMAC National Approach to Child Protection Working Group; Youth Information Advisory Group; Family Relationships Education and Skills Training Reference Group; Parentline Reference Group; Family Relationships Service Program (FRSP) Outcomes Research Working Group; the Longitudinal Study for Indigenous Children (LSIC); and the 2005 BCA/ACCI Work and Family Awards (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Consultations, visitors and representation	
	Total No.
Consultations*	88
Visitors to the Institute and AIFS staff visits	98
Institute representation at conferences (including paper presentations) and meetings	131
Institute representation on expert panels	54
<p>* Does not include expert advice provided by Clearinghouses via their Information and Advisory Service, which total about 600 in the reporting period. <i>Note:</i> Detailed listings are available on the Institute's website www.aifs.gov.au.</p>	

THEME 1 FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Research about family relationships covers three broad themes: trends in family transitions, positive family relationships, and family law. Transitions include young people leaving home, and couple and family formation, dissolution and re-formation. Particular attention is given to factors that help explain diverse pathways (including the strengthening of relationships in their early stages), the way these pathways are negotiated, and their impact on family members. Central to this work is the evaluation of the impact on families of the *Family Law Act 1975*, particularly in relation to recent amendments. Trends are examined at societal, family and individual levels.

Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse

The Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse (AFRC) aims to improve the well-being of families and children by supporting practitioners, service providers and policy makers in the development and delivery of family and relationship programs ranging from prevention and early intervention through to post-separation services.

The Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse was announced by Senator the Hon Kay Patterson, the Minister for Family and Community Services in December 2005. The Clearinghouse is an information and advisory unit administered under the Family Relationships Services Program (FRSP). The FRSP supports positive family relationships through a wide range of prevention, early intervention and post-separation services. The Institute was awarded the contract to set up and operate the AFRC.

Work on the Clearinghouse commenced at the Institute in April 2006. By the end of June 2006 the parameters defining the Clearinghouse functions and operations have been finalised. The website has been designed and the collection of materials for the first issue of the AFRC newsletter, *Family Relationships Quarterly*, is almost complete. A reference group of recognised experts in the family and relationship support field is being established to guide the development and ongoing operation of the Clearinghouse.

Primary function

The principal activity of the Clearinghouse is the collection, synthesis and dissemination of current information on family relationships. It provides access to: practice- and policy-related research and information; developments in policy and practice; notice of emerging issues; opportunities for training, networking and information exchange; profiles of new and innovative programs; and a range of training and practice resources. These resources and information are disseminated electronically in the form of briefing papers, in-depth issues papers, a quarterly newsletter (*Family Relationships Quarterly*), the AFRC website, an email alert service, and a moderated email discussion list. Briefing papers offer a concise commentary on a current issue, while the in-depth papers provide a more extensive exploration and analysis of topical or unanswered research, policy or practice questions.

The newsletter includes feature articles, updates on the latest research, reviews of programs and books, literature highlights, conference abstracts, and future conferences and workshops. AFRC members will receive further news and information via the email service, *AFRC-alert*.

The AFRC website (www.aifs.gov.au/afrc) provides a focal point for service providers, policy makers and researchers seeking information and resources to improve their knowledge and inform their practice. As well as containing material disseminated via *Family Relationships Quarterly*, the website comprises links to: other national and international research and information sites and organisations; government and other online articles and reports; curriculum and training materials and program resources; collections of family-related trends and statistics; and the Institute library catalogue. Interested parties can join the AFRC via the website.

Family Trends and Transitions

Family Trends and Transitions is an ongoing project that analyses broad trends in patterns of leaving home, partnership and family formation, family stability, and family dissolution and re-formation, changes in family structure, and fertility, along with associated values, attitudes and beliefs. As well as providing a better understanding of society's core values, the monitoring and analysis of these trends is important for policy development and for the timely development and design of research projects.

Family-related trends are disseminated through publications and paper presentations, the online database Family Facts and Figures, media interviews, and the handling of queries from internal and external sources. Updating the Family Facts and Figures database is an ongoing process. This database has been widely used, with an average 8,500 pages downloaded per month.

During the year, publications and presentations have been prepared on a variety of topics including: pathways from cohabiting relationships, work hours preferences among mothers, families with adolescents and parent-adolescent relationships, men's and women's views about assisted reproductive technologies and the socio-demographic characteristics and parenting confidence of new mothers. The project has also contributed a chapter entitled "Families in Australia: continuities and change" for the forthcoming book *Couple Therapy in Australia*.

Team members also accepted invitations to present seminars for two postgraduate programs: a seminar on "Changing patterns in Australian families and health behaviours" to students in the program of Master of Public Health, University of Melbourne and a seminar on "Ageing and fertility" to students of Principles of Social Policy course, Australian National University.

Media interviews during the year included discussions on: changes in Australian families; parent-adolescent relationships; trends in leaving home; recent trends in fertility and factors that may contribute to these trends; views and perceptions on assisted reproductive technologies; the circumstances and wellbeing of new mothers of different ages; and mothers' labour force participation and work hours preferences.

Team members also participate in advisory or reference groups established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to assist in the development of its surveys and presentation of findings.

Publications

Australian Institute of Family Studies (2006). *Snapshots of Australian families with adolescents*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/snapshots/adolescents.html.

Hayes, A., Weston, R., Gray, M., Qu, L., Higgins, D., Hand, K., & Soriano, G. (2006). Family relationships through life: An illustration of the Australian Institute of Family Studies' Research Plan (2006–2008). *Family Matters*, 73, 4–12.

Morehead, A., & Soriano, G. (2005). Teenage mothers: Constructing family life. *Family Matters*, 72, 64–71.

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2005). A woman's place? Work hour preferences revisited. *Family Matters*, 72, 72–77.

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2005). Family size: men's and women's aspirations over the years. *Relatewell*, 9(2), 4–7.

Weston, R., & Gray, M. (2006). Assessing family and community life through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey: An evaluation. *Family Matters*, 73, 32–37.

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2005). Beliefs about IVF as a personal fallback option. *Family Matters*, 71, 44–49.

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2006). IVF – a viable means of achieving delayed parenthood? *Threshold*, 86, 42.

Conference presentations

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2005, 20–22 July). *Assisted reproductive technology (ART): The fallback option?*. Paper presented at the Australian Social Policy Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2005, 23 July). *Fertility decision-making: Issues for marriage and relationship education and counselling*. Invited paper presented at the Workshop of Diversity & Change in Australian Families – Implications for Family Relationship Educators, the Victorian State Marriage and Relationship Educators' Association of Australia Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Gray, M., & Weston, R. (2005, 11–12 August). *Family and community life*. Paper presented at the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research Conference on Indigenous Socioeconomic Outcomes: Assessing Recent Evidence, Canberra, ACT.

Weston, R. (2005, 29–30 September). Discussant, Symposium on Families, Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Weston, R., Qu, L., & de Vaus, D. (2005, 29–30 September). *Pathways from cohabitation*. Paper presented at the HILDA Survey Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2005, 9 November). *Having children: Trends, hopes, expectations and the IVF option*. Keynote address provided at the Infertility Treatment Authority Symposium on Future Directions in ART: Choices, Rights and Responsibilities, Melbourne, Vic.

de Vaus, D., Gray, M., Qu, L., & Stanton, D. (2006, 16–18 June). *The financial consequences of divorce for later life*. Paper presented at the International Research Seminar on Issues in Social Security, Social Protection in an Ageing World Foundation for International Studies on Social Security, Sigtuna, Sweden.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2005, 13 October). *Leaving it later to marry – leaving it later to have children. When is it too late?*. Invited paper presented at the Workshop of Marriage and Relationship Educators Association, Victorian Branch, Melbourne, Vic.

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2006, 4 April). *Demographics of ageing and fertility*. Presentation to the Principles of Social Policy course, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT.

Weston, R. (2006, 14–15 June). *AIFS research relating to family transitions and family law*. Presentation at the “Show and Tell” joint workshop between the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, ACT.

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2006, 23 June). *Families, their changing patterns and health behaviours*. Paper presented to the Child Public Health Elective 2006 Program, Centre for Community Child Health, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Weston, R. (2005, 7 December). Invited chair of breakout session on the family, Brotherhood of St Laurence Child Poverty Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Member, ABS General Social Survey Reference Group, Australian Bureau of Statistics (R. Weston).

Member, ABS Family Statistics Advisory Group (R. Weston, A. Hayes).

Member, National Council on Family Relations, USA (R. Weston).

Member, Australian Population Association (R. Weston).

Member, International Society for Quality of Life Studies (R. Weston).

The Case for Marriage in Australia

The catalyst for this project was the publication in 2003 of the book *The Case For Marriage* by American researcher Linda Waite and journalist Maggie Gallagher, in which results from a vast body of research were reported that support the contention that getting and remaining married is generally associated with better functioning and wellbeing of individuals, couples and families. The broad research question to be addressed is whether such a case for marriage can be made in Australia. The first stage of the project was completed last year: a critical examination of relevant Australian research to determine whether, in fact, marriage does confer a range of advantages on individuals and couples and if so, the nature and extent of those advantages.

The second stage of the project is currently under way. The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey was analysed to establish whether marital status is significantly related to the health, happiness and economic wellbeing of Australians. The outcome of this analysis will be published in 2006.

External representation

Parker, R. (2005, 12–13 November). Attendance at the Australian Psychological Society Psychology of Relationships Interest Group Conference, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, Vic.

AIFS Representative, Victorian Association of Family Therapists (Research Advisory Committee) (R. Parker).

AIFS representative, Family Relationships Education and Skills Training Reference Group, Department of Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (R. Parker).

AIFS Representative, Victorian Marriage and Relationship Education Network (R. Parker).

Member, International Association for Relationship Research (R. Parker).

Member, Marriage Educators Association of Australia (R. Parker).

Member, Threshold Editorial Board (R. Weston).

Building Healthy Couple Relationships

An important aspect of the Institute's work involves the monitoring and evaluation of research and policies on positive family relationships and education and support, and dissemination of findings. Issues of particular interest include ways in which couples develop strategies for living together and for adjusting to change. Relationships are examined from various perspectives: strengthening relationships in their early stages, identifying factors that contribute to the trajectories of relationship quality and stability, and learning lessons from long-lasting marriages. During the year, a special column entitled "Relationship Trends" was introduced in *Family Matters*. This column has published articles provided internally and by two marriage and relationship education service providers (on invitation).

Publications

Parker, R. (2005). Research and evaluation in marriage and relationship education. *Family Matters*, 71, 32–35.

Parker, R. (2006). Relationships: Perspectives on the future of marriage. *Family Matters*, 72, 78–82.

Family law monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and contributing to the debate on family law issues is part of the core function of the Institute. The scope of family law research has broadened to include not only marriage and divorce but also parental responsibilities to children regardless of whether the parents have ever lived together or married.

Over the past year, much of the main focus of our family law research stream has been on (a) organising the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition; and (b) developing a conceptual framework for monitoring and evaluating the new family law system (which comes into effect in July 2006). Five projects formed the hub of family law research at the Institute during the year: Caring for Children after Parental Separation; Understanding Contact Disputes; Family Law Data Mapping Project; Allegations of Family Violence in the Context of Family Law Proceedings; and the Experiences of Parents and Children after Family Court Decisions about Relocation. Activities are reported separately for each of these areas.

Publications

Caruana, C. (2006). Family law update: State and federal reform agendas. *Family Matters*, 73, 60–61.

Smyth, B. (2005). Modernising the Child Support Scheme: Some reflections. *Family Matters*, 71, 58–61.

Smyth, B., & Weston, R. (2005). Attitudes to Child Support in Australia. *Family Matters*, 71, 46–57.

Submissions

Smyth, B., Qu, L., & Weston, R. (27 April 2006). Confidential submission on Relocation after separation to the Family Law Council.

Smyth, B., & Moloney, L. (February 2006). Submission to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee Inquiry into the provisions of the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Bill 2005.

Presentations

Smyth, B. (2006, 21 April). *Social Protection: Sole parents, child support and family law*. Seminar presented to the Principles of Social Policy – Master of Public Policy Course, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT.

Smyth, B., & Gray, M. (2006, 3 May). *Child support policy: Some reflections on the past, present and future*. Presentation at the AIFS Seminar Series, Melbourne, Vic.

Hayes, A., Gray, M., & Smyth, B. (2006, 22 May). Presentation to the Family Relationship Centre Taskforce, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT.

External representation

Consultant, Children in Focus child-inclusive divorce mediation research evaluation (B. Smyth).

Editorial consultant, *The Children's Cases Pilot Project: An exploratory study of impacts on parenting capacity and child wellbeing*. Final report to the Family Court of Australia, Family Transitions (Ed. McIntosh, J. (2006) (B. Smyth).

Member, Separation Support Network, Canberra (B. Smyth).

Member, Editorial Board, *Journal of Family Studies* (B. Smyth).

AIFS observer, Family Law Council of Australia (B. Smyth).

Member, Improving Post-Parenting Order Processes Sub-Committee, Family Law Council of Australia (B. Smyth).

Member, Statistical Snapshot Sub-Committee – Family Law Council of Australia (B. Smyth).

Member, Editorial Reference Group, Mensline Australia (B. Smyth).

Member, ARC Families, Law and Social Policy Research Network (B. Smyth).

Member, Research and Ethics Committee, Family Court of Australia (B. Smyth).

Member, Ministerial Taskforce on Child Support – Research directions, Canberra (M. Gray and B. Smyth).

Allegations of Violence in the Context of Family Law Proceedings

This study aims to analyse a random sample of 300 files from the Family Court of Australia and Federal Magistrates Court of Australia to determine how often allegations of violence and child abuse are made, how often allegations are denied, who makes the allegations, what form the allegations take, and how allegations are processed through the court system.

This project is significant because, although there is a literature on allegations of violence in the context of post-separation parenting disputes in Australia, there is very limited empirical evidence in relation to the prevalence of allegations of family violence and how they are dealt with. As a consequence, ongoing lively debate continues about whether such allegations are widespread.

The research has been commissioned by the Attorney-General's Department. The Australian Government has recently proposed the most significant changes to family law in three decades, and there is an urgent need to strengthen the evidence-base for monitoring and refining these reforms. The importance of the research into allegations of family violence is that, under the new legislation, much is likely to hinge on the presence or absence of violence, both in terms of process and substance. The project is due to be completed in 2006.

Conference presentation

Gray, M., & Smyth, B. (2006, 21 April). *Allegations of family violence in the context of family law proceedings*. Paper presented to the Family Court of Australia National Registrars Conference, Canberra, ACT.

Other (non-conference) presentation

Smyth, B., & Hayes, A. (2006, 17 May). *Allegations of family violence in the context of family law proceedings: An overview*. Presentation to the Chief Justices Forum, Family Court of Australia, Canberra, ACT.

External representation

Richardson, N. (2005, 24–25 November). Attendance at the Safe Transitions: Managing Conflict and Responding to Violence in Post-Separation Families Conference. Hosted by the Relationships Australia (NSW) and Unitingcare (NSW/ACT), Sydney, NSW.

Understanding Contact Disputes

The aim of this project is to gain insight into the prevalence of disputes about contact and the dynamics and trigger events that lead to disputes on contact escalating into legal conflict. The research design involves: (a) a series of focus groups with family law professionals who work with parents in dispute about contact; (b) face-to-face interviews with separated parents who have been in dispute about their parenting arrangements; and (c) telephone interviews with a national random sample of separated parents.

The project is a collaborative one between the Institute and the University of Sydney Faculty of Law. It is funded by the Attorney-General's Department in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Family Studies. The Institute's part of the project is due to be completed in 2007.

Family Law Data Mapping Project

In response to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs' *Every Picture Tells A Story* report, the Australian Government announced the most significant changes to family law in 30 years. The reforms aim to help prevent separation and, where separation does occur, help parents agree on what is best for the children rather than going to court for a judicial determination.

To assess the impact of these reforms accurately, and to assist in improving outcomes for the individuals and families who come into contact with the family law system, reliable information is required. One of the most valuable sources of information on what is actually occurring in the family law system is the considerable amount of data collected by agencies within that system. However, as the content of these data is not summarised in one place, it is often difficult to identify, locate and access this information. To address these issues, the Attorney-General's Department has funded the Australian Institute of Family Studies, in collaboration with the Australian Social Science Data Archive (ASSDA), to conduct the Family Law Data Mapping Project, which is a strategic review of family law data in Australia.

The project aims to chart and summarise the structure of the various databases held by key government and non-government agencies in the family law system. It should enhance the ability of agencies to evaluate programs, develop evidence-based policy, and fine-tune service delivery for maximum efficiency – particularly in areas where solutions are needed for cross-jurisdictional problems. Phase 1 of the project involves obtaining stakeholder agreement to participate; Phase 2 of the project involves collecting and analysing the metadata. The project is due for completion in 2007.

Presentation

Smyth, B., & Hayes, A. (2006, 17 May). *The Family Law Data Mapping Project: An overview*. Presentation to the Chief Justices Forum, Family Court of Australia, Canberra, ACT.

The Experiences of Parents and Children after Family Court Decisions about Relocation

The Family Court often decides whether to allow a parent to relocate with children despite opposition from the other parent. A recent parliamentary review of the family law system lamented the lack of research about the aftermath of decisions about children. This project, funded by an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant, will begin to fill this gap by exploring experiences after relocation decisions. The resulting analysis will help to inform: (a) future decision-making on relocation after separation; and (b) the development of a more flexible and responsive family law system. Interviews will be conducted with affected parents and, importantly, children. The project is due to be completed in 2007.

Caring for Children after Parental Separation

As part of the broad policy shift towards encouraging post-separation co-parenting, there remains keen interest in ascertaining the nature, amount and quality of contact that non-resident parents have with their children. To date, however, little is known in Australia about some of the most rudimentary components of parent-child contact, such as the distinction between “daytime only” contact versus “sleepovers”, and “holiday” versus “term-time” arrangements. Failure to make these distinctions can inaccurately convey both the amount and quality of contact that is occurring. The Caring for Children after Parental Separation project is currently addressing some of these gaps.

The main aims of the project are: (a) to map the nature, amount, and quality of parent-child contact between non-resident parents and their children; (b) to improve understanding of why a significant proportion of non-resident parents have little or no contact with their children; and (c) to examine the interrelation, if any, between contact and child support.

While the focus of the project is on mapping the detail of post-separation parenting patterns, the data will serve as a benchmark against which to begin modelling the economic implications of contact for parents (both non-resident and resident). They will also act as an important source of information for a more comprehensive investigation into the impact of divorce on children and parents.

Data have been collected from two sources: (a) a series of focus groups comprising 54 separated or divorced parents with at least one child under 18 years; and (b) telephone interviews with 971 separated parents from around Australia who

had a biological or adopted child under 18 in 2003. Data from the HILDA Survey are also being used to augment the project. The project is due to be completed by December 2006.

Publication

Smyth, B. (2005). Time to rethink time? The experience of time with children after divorce. *Family Matters*, 71, 4–10.

Conference presentations

Smyth, B. (2005, 7–9 July). *It's about time: Time with mum, time with dad after divorce*. Keynote address presented at the Children's Issues Centre Conference, Dunedin, NZ.

Smyth, B. (2005, 11 July). *Parent-child contact and child support after divorce: Recent Australian insights*. Keynote address presented at Parental separation: Recent advances and future directions Conference, Wellington, NZ.

Smyth, B. (2005, 30 September). *Time, identity, justice, and post-separation parenting: Some reflections in the face of a new family law system*. Keynote address presented at the Family Services 2005 National Conference – Supporting Australian Families, Adelaide, SA.

Smyth, B. (2005, 11 November). *Patterns of parenting after separation: What does Australian research tell us?*. Paper presented at the National Family Court of Australia Judges' Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Smyth, B. (2006, 1 June). *Avoiding crises for non-resident parents: The importance of "being-in-the-moment" time with children*. Paper presented at the Association of Family and Conciliation Court annual conference, Tampa Bay, Florida.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Smyth, B. (2005, 8 September). *Time as an experience rather than as a number: Sharing the care of children after divorce*. Guest lecture presented at Swinburne University of Technology, Department of Sociology, Melbourne, Vic.

Smyth, B. (2005, 15 September). *Patterns of parenting after divorce*. Guest lecture presented at the Bouverie Family Centre, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Vic.

Smyth, B. (2005, 17 October). *Parenting after separation: Some reflections (in time and space) in the face of the new family law system*. AGM invited speaker, Relationships Australia, Melbourne, Vic.

Smyth, B. (2006, 16 March). *Parenting after separation: What does Australian research tell us?*. Guest lecture presented at Victoria University, Faculty of Law, Melbourne, Vic.

Smyth, B. (2006, 17 May). *Parenting after separation: What do we know?*. Seminar presented at the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs for National Families Week, Melbourne, Vic.

Smyth, B. (2006, 31 May). *Patterns of parenting after separation in Australia: What do we know?*. Guest lecture presented at the Bouverie Family Centre, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Vic.

Family Law Reform Evaluation Project: baseline data collection

In response to the Parliamentary Report *Every Picture Tells a Story*, the Australian Government announced the largest ever investment in reforming the family law system. The new system is intended to help prevent separation and build strong, healthy family relationships; provide information, advice and dispute resolution services to help separating parents agree on what is best for their children rather than fighting in court; and provide a highly visible entry point that is a doorway to other services that families need, and facilitate access to those services.

To enable the effects of the new family law system to be assessed, information needs to be collected before (or soon after) the reforms are implemented on 1 July 2006. To this end, the Attorney-General's Department and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs commissioned the Institute to collect several pieces of baseline data. This involves: (a) a telephone survey of the general population of parents; (b) focus groups and in-depth interviews with individuals who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and (c) a survey of family law specialists. The expected completion date of the fieldwork component of the study is July 2006.

International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition

The year 2005 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Australian Institute of Family Studies. As mentioned earlier, the Institute was established in 1980 under the *Family Law Act 1975*, with the broad goal of improving understanding of factors affecting marriage and family stability. Family law itself represents one of those factors and also serves as a foundation of many policies and programs that have an impact on families.

In this light, the Institute was a partner in the hosting of the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, held at Parliament House in Canberra on 1–2 December 2005. Our partners in the forum were the Attorney-General's Department, and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. This event brought together leading family law experts and key stakeholders in Australia and overseas to discuss issues and exchange ideas around cutting-edge strategies and programs for supporting families through family transitions – particularly relationship change.

The forum presentations are available as a set of proceedings. This collection of papers provides an interesting mix of argument, data, commentary and reflection on where research, policy and practice have been – and, more importantly, are heading – in relation to supporting families through relationship change.

Conference presentations

Gray, M. (2005, 1–2 December). *Child support*. Paper presented at the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT.

Smyth, B. (2005, 1–2 December). *Practical resources for separating parents*. Opening remarks at the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT.

Smyth, B. (2005, 1–2 December). *Moments in time: Some reflections on the new family law system*. Presented at the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, Canberra, ACT.

Weston, R. (2005, 1–2 December). *Perspectives from East Asia*. Opening remarks at the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition, Parliament House, Canberra, ACT.

External representation

Qu, L., Richardson, N., & Soriano, G. (2005, 1–2 December). Organisation and attendance at the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition: Legislative, practical and policy responses. Hosted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies on behalf of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Attorney-General's Department, Canberra, ACT.

Families in the Asian Region

The Institute has continued to develop an improved understanding of family-related trends and issues shared by, or unique to, countries in different stages of modernisation in the Asian region, and to establish or strengthen existing connections with countries in the region regarding research on family relationships and wellbeing. This work has involved strengthening links with the International Branch of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, and with key stakeholders in the Asian Region, participating in relevant conferences, and coordinating some of the visits by delegations from the region. Some of these commitments involve Institute-wide cooperation and sharing of responsibilities.

A major undertaking of the year has been providing detailed advice on the design of the Vietnam National Family Survey (both the design of the survey and the interview schedules). In addition, delegations from Malaysia and Vietnam visited the Institute and a keynote address was provided at a national workshop in Vietnam. The Institute continues to strengthen its links with policy makers, academics and family law practitioners in New Zealand. Participants of the International Forum on Family Relationships in Transition included invited delegates from China, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore and Vietnam.

Presentations

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2005, 18 August). *The state of families in Australia*. Keynote address presented at the National Workshop on the Vietnam National Family Survey, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2005, 23 November). *Youth in Australia*. Presentation to the Delegation of Vietnam at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Vic.

Weston, R., & Qu, L. (2005, 29 November). *The state of families in Australia*. Presentation to the Delegation of Malaysia at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Qu, L., & Weston, R. (2005, 16–18 November). Attendance at the Beijing Forum on the Harmony and Prosperity of Civilizations – Asia's Opportunities and Development in Globalization. Co-sponsored by Peking University and Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies, Beijing, People's Republic of China.

Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey

The Institute continues to contribute to the ongoing design of the Household, Income, and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. HILDA is being conducted by a consortium of three research bodies: the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne (the lead agency); the Australian Institute of Family Studies; and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). Institute researchers, in consultation with the Director, develop the family dynamics module of the survey and work in partnership with the other members of the consortium in coordinating the overall questionnaire design. Wave 1 of the survey was completed in late 2001, gathering data from almost 14,000 people from 7,680 households around the country. Wave 6 is

scheduled to be in the field in late 2006. Since the first wave of data became available, Institute researchers have used the HILDA dataset to address a range of research questions, the findings of which have been the subject of a number of papers and presentations.

Publications

Publications based on the HILDA dataset are listed in other sections of this Annual Report.

Presentations

Presentations based on the HILDA dataset are listed in other sections of this Annual Report.

External representation

Member, Project Management Group, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (R. Weston).

Member, External Reference Group, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs' Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey (R. Weston).

THEME 2 CHILDREN, YOUTH AND PATTERNS OF CARE

Research on children, youth and patterns of care focuses on three main areas: family influences on children's development; non-parental care for children; and family influences on the extent to which children and young people engage with society. These three areas all stem from the recognition that children's development is influenced by the family environment. The family influences how children develop. However, children also spend time in places where others are responsible for their care and influence their lives, such as child care centres and schools. Children are also influenced by the areas and the communities in which they live. Understanding the influences of child and family characteristics, parenting practices, family structures and factors in the local community and social environment on children's development is crucial information for the development of policy and the provision of services to families.

Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children

Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) continues to be a major project for the Institute. This study was initiated and funded by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and is managed by the Institute. The first main wave of the study commenced in 2004. More than 10,000 families were recruited to the study, with about half having an infant as the study child and the other half with a child aged 4–5 years selected as the study child.

The main activities since the previous Annual Report have been those associated with the release of Wave 1 data, the conduct of the between waves mail-out ('Wave 1.5'), preparation for and commencement of Wave 2 of data collection, and the early development of Wave 3 content and methodology.

Since the release of the Wave 1 data more than 90 researchers and government analysts have been granted access to the data. User support services have been provided to those who receive the data, through documentation supplied with the dataset, regularly updated information on the data access page of the website, and monthly data user groups teleconferences. The results from the analyses of the first wave of data are starting to be published and presented in a variety of media.

Two issues of *Family Matters*, the Institute's peer-reviewed journal, have contained articles featuring *Growing Up in Australia* analyses. Issue 72, summer 2005, contained articles on the relationship between childhood injuries and family type, neighbourhood influences on children's wellbeing, work–family balance, child care, the role of grandparents in children's lives, and children's temperament and adjustment. Issue 73, 2006, contained an article on the socio-demographic characteristics and parenting of new mothers of different ages.

The Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs has commissioned four thematic papers so far using data from LSAC, and the Institute has

been involved with three of these: “Mothers, fathers, children and work”; “How well are Australian infants and 4 to 5 year old children doing?”; and “Child care in Australia”.

An important part of the study is maintaining contact with the participants. As well as obtaining several types of contact information for both parents, giving families change of address cards and mementos that have details of the freecall 1800 number and the email address, sending birthday cards and season’s greetings calendars to the study children, further contact was made via a study newsletter and a short mail-back questionnaire (one for each cohort) that was sent to all study families about one year after the initial interview. This process is known as Wave 1.5.

Wave 1.5 included a nested study by Dr Gillian Whitehouse from the University of Queensland, called The Parental Leave in Australia Survey which examined parental working conditions and leave around the time of the birth of the study child.

Both hardcopy and online questionnaires were provided for Wave 1.5, and follow-up was conducted by both mail and telephone. Of the 9,996 questionnaires sent, 7,157 were returned (3,573 infant and 3,584 child), which represented an overall response rate of 71.7 per cent (70.6 per cent infant and 72.6 per cent child). Only 7.0 per cent of the respondents used the online facility. Overall, contact details were updated for about 80 per cent of the study families.

Wave 2 development continued throughout 2005. The first stage of Wave 2 data collection occurred throughout October and November 2005, with over 400 families interviewed. The second wave of data collection for most families is occurring during April to October 2006.

Wave 2 data collection involves a 40-minute computer-assisted interview with the parent who knows the child best. This parent also fills in a short self-complete form while the interviewer is in the home, and self-complete questionnaires are being left behind for both resident parents (where applicable) to fill in. Two 24-hour time-use diaries, about how the study child spends their day, are also being left behind. If the child has a parent living elsewhere and the resident parent agrees to provide contact details for this parent, then the other parent is being invited to take part in the study by completing a short questionnaire.

As in Wave 1, interviewers undertake some direct assessments of the older cohort of children, who are now aged 6–7 years. For the first time these children are also being interviewed about how they find school and their feelings more generally. Children in both cohorts are weighed and height and girth measurements are being taken. Questionnaires are also being sent to teachers (for the children 6–7 years old) and child carers (for the children 2–3 years old).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is conducting the fieldwork for Wave 2, and early indications are that families are looking forward to their second interview. Over 150 interviewers were trained in six training courses conducted by Institute and ABS staff during March and April 2006. Early indications are that a retention rate of at least 85 per cent will be achieved between Waves 1 and 2.

Work began on the development of Wave 3 in early 2006 and will continue throughout the year and into 2007. As occurred in the development of previous waves, six design teams have been formed, covering the research domains of health, education, child care, family functioning, child functioning and socio-demographics. Each team comprises members of the Consortium Advisory Group, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs representatives and others who have expertise in the area.

Publications

Alexander, M., & Baxter, J. (2005). Impacts of work on family life among partnered parents of young children. *Family Matters*, 72, 18–25.

Edwards, B. (2005). Does it take a village? An investigation of neighbourhood effects on Australian children's development. *Family Matters*, 72, 36–43.

Gray, M., Misson, S., & Hayes, A. (2005). Young children and their grandparents. *Family Matters*, 72, 10–17.

Gray, M., & Sanson, A. (2005). Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. *Family Matters*, 72, 4–9.

Richardson, N., Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., Tooley, G., & Stokes, M. (2005). The relationship between childhood injuries and family type. *Family Matters*, 72, 44–49.

Smart, D., & Sanson, A. (2005). A comparison of children's temperament and adjustment across 20 years. *Family Matters*, 72, 50–57.

Soloff, C., Lawrence, D., Misson, S., & Johnstone, R. (2006). *Wave 1 weighting and non-response*. (Australian Institute of Family Studies Technical Paper No. 3). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Weston, R., Soriano, G., & Qu, L. (2006). Starting early, starting late: Socio-demographic characteristics and parenting of new mothers of different ages. *Family Matters*, 73, 58–65.

Commissioned reports

Project Operations Team (2005, December). *Project report on Wave 2 final collection methodology and content proposal*. A report to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Project Operations Team (2005, December). *Project report on Wave 2 dress rehearsal*. A report to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Project Operations Team (2005, December). *Project report on 2006 workplan*. A report to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Project Operations Team (2006, March). *Project report on Wave 1.5 between waves questionnaire: Outcome report – main wave process*. A report to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Conference presentations

Misson, S. (2005, 6–9 July). *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children – Early data*. Paper presented at the 14th Biennial Australasian Human Development Conference, Perth, WA.

Misson, S. (2005, 6–9 July). *Summarising children's wellbeing: The Growing Up in Australia outcome index*. Paper presented at the 14th Biennial Australasian Human Development Conference, Perth, WA.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Soloff, C., & Misson, S. (2005, 18 August). *What can we learn from the Growing Up in Australia study?*. Presentation at the AIFS Seminar Series, Melbourne, Vic.

Soloff, C. (2005, 24 November). *Overview of Growing Up in Australia*. Presentation to NSW Early Childhood Intervention Coordination Program Statewide Committee, Sydney, NSW.

Soloff, C. (2006, 21 March). *Overview of Growing Up in Australia*. Presentation to the ABS New South Wales, Sydney, NSW.

Soloff, C. (2006, 31 March). *Overview of Growing Up in Australia*. Presentation to New South Wales Department of Community Services, Sydney, NSW.

Soloff, C. (2006, 12 April). *Overview of Growing Up in Australia*. Presentation to South Australian government agencies, Adelaide, SA.

Bencic, L. (2006, 21 April). *Overview of Growing Up in Australia*. Presentation to Queensland government and research agencies, Brisbane, Qld.

Soloff, C. (2006, 21 April). *Overview of Growing Up in Australia*. Presentation to Western Australian government and research agencies, Perth, WA.

Misson, S. (2006, 26 June). *What can we learn from the Growing Up in Australia study?*. Presentation to the Master of School Leadership class, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Edwards, B. (2006, 22 June). Attendance at the First National Conference of Gender and Health Inequalities, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Vic.

Member, International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development 2006 Pre-conference Workshop Committee for "Development in Context: Making best use of existing longitudinal data" (B. Edwards).

Invited participant, ABS Children and Youth Information Development Plan Assessing Data Needs Against Actions Workshop, Canberra (B. Edwards).

Publications by Consortium Advisory Group members

Harrison, L., & Ungerer, J. (2005). *What can the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children tell us about infants' and 4 to 5 year olds' experiences of early childhood education and care?* *Family Matters*, 72, 26–35.

Australian Temperament Project

The Australian Temperament Project (ATP) is an ongoing longitudinal study following young people's psychosocial development from infancy into adulthood, investigating the contribution of personal, family, peer and broader environmental factors to adjustment and wellbeing.

The study recruited 2,443 families in 1983 when the children were between 4 and 8 months of age, and has completed 13 data collection waves across the first 20 years of life. The most recent data collection was in 2002 at the age of 19–20 years, and the next data collection is to take place in mid-2006 at 23–24 years. The Institute has housed and taken the lead in the study since 2000, in conjunction with researchers from the University of Melbourne and the Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne.

Using mail surveys, parents, maternal and child health nurses, primary school teachers, and the young people themselves have completed questionnaires about the children's development and adjustment. The aspects assessed range from attributes and assets such as temperament style, social skills, family and peer relationships, school adjustment to problems and difficulties such as antisocial behaviour, substance use, anxiety and depression. As the study members enter adulthood, the focus has widened to encompass employment and career development, relationship formation and dissolution, fertility aspirations, parenthood, and social and civic participation.

The 14th cohort-wide data collection is currently taking place and is expected to conclude in early 2007. Reports have been sought from the young people and their parents. The major areas of the young people's lives assessed are: educational and occupational participation, physical and psychological health, interpersonal

relationships (with parents, peers and partners), attitudes towards marriage and parenthood, adjustment problems and risk taking behaviours, and pro-social behaviour and civic engagement. The information collected in earlier waves will enable the charting of across-time patterns of these characteristics and behaviours, as well as their antecedents and associated correlates.

As well as preparation for the 14th data collection, statistical analysis and the dissemination of findings from the longitudinal dataset continued during the reporting period. For example, ATP data provided a valuable benchmark by which to compare the temperament style and adjustment of children growing up in Australia today. These comparisons shed light on the relative adjustment and well-being of two cohorts of Australian children growing up in differing eras (the 1980s and the 2000s). There has been considerable media interest in the ATP study, with the study being publicised in newspaper articles, radio interviews and current affairs television segments.

Publications

Smart, D. (2005). *Year 2005 ATP Newsletter for Parents*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Studies. Available at: www.aifs.gov.au/atp.

Smart, D. (2005). *Year 2005 ATP Newsletter for Young Adults*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Studies. Available at: www.aifs.gov.au/atp.

Smart, D., Prior, M., Sanson, A., & Oberklaid, F. (2005). Children with reading difficulties: A six-year follow-up from early elementary school to adolescence [Special issue]. *Australian Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 10, 3–4, 63–76.

Conference presentations

Smart, D., & Sanson, A. (2005, August). *The collaboration between the Australian Institute of Family Studies and Crime Prevention Victoria: Linking up research, policy and practice*. Paper presented at the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Hayes, L., Smart, D., Toumbourou, J., & Sanson, A. (2005, November). *Parenting influences on adolescent alcohol use*. Paper presented at the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and Other Drugs Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Smart, D., Richardson, N., Sanson, A., Dussuyer, I., Marshall, B., Toumbourou, J., Prior, M., & Oberklaid, F. (2005, November). *Patterns and precursors of adolescent antisocial behaviour, outcomes and connections*. Presentation at Launch of 3rd Report, Crime Prevention Victoria, Melbourne, Vic.

Sanson, A., & Smart, D. (2006, February). *Pathways to antisocial behaviour: Findings from the Australian Temperament Project*. Presentation at the Childhood Aggression: Pathways, Polices and Prevention Seminar, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Member, Brotherhood of St Laurence Life Chances Project Advisory Committee (D. Smart).

Member, Local Organising Committee for the International Society for the Study of Behavioral Development 2006 Conference (D. Smart).

Member, Longitudinal Study of Australia's Children Wave 3 Child Functioning Design Team (D. Smart).

Member, Parentline Reference Group (D. Smart).

Member, Youth Information Advisory Group, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (D. Smart).

External reviewer, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology* (D. Smart).

ATP/TAC/RACV collaboration

The collaboration between the Institute and the Transport Accident Commission of Victoria and the Royal Automobile Club of Victoria has been extended. The first phase of this collaborative project collected data in the 2002 ATP survey wave on young drivers' learner driving experiences, recent driving exposure, and road safety behaviours (risky driving, involvement in crashes, detection for speeding). It then made use of the ATP longitudinal dataset to investigate the personal, family and other environmental factors associated with differing types of driving behaviours. The findings from this first phase were disseminated through a research report, journal articles and conference presentations.

A memorandum of understanding has been negotiated to extend this work. The second phase of the collaboration will collect, analyse and report new data on the driver history and experiences of the 23 to 24-year-old members of the ATP study, and the across-time continuity of differing patterns of driving behaviours from 20 to 24 years of age.

Child Care in Australia: Wave 1 thematic publication

In collaboration with project co-directors from the School of Teacher Education, Charles Sturt University; the Department of Psychology, Macquarie University; and project representatives from the Centre for Developmental Health, Curtin University, the Discipline of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Newcastle, and the Institute of Early Childhood, Macquarie University, the Institute is participating in a project to analyse the *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Wave 1* dataset. The key purpose of the project is to examine the relationships between patterns of child care and early education, family demographics and development of infants and 4-year-old children. The contract for the conduct of the project, which includes a review of the literature concerning the effects of child care on development, was awarded to Charles Sturt University just prior to the close of the current reporting period.

External representation

Member, Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Wave 3 Child Care Design Team (S. Wise).

Child Care in Cultural Context

The focus of this study is children from culturally diverse cultural backgrounds who use mainstream child care services; the extent to which developmental aspects of their home and child care environments differ because of variations in the cultural values and beliefs of caregivers, the extent to which professional caregivers understand and negotiate these differences, and whether different experiences and expectations from two care environments is detrimental to development. The extent to which existing child care services meet the requirements of families from different cultural backgrounds was also explored in May 2006, a paper was released addressing pedagogical issues concerning differential treatment of children from culturally diverse backgrounds in home and child care environments. Analysis of the extent of differential treatment of children, and the effect this has on child adjustment have been conducted and will be released in late 2006. These papers will inform government, policy development and educators about how the child care experiences of children from culturally diverse cultural backgrounds can be optimised.

Publication

Hand, K., & Wise, S. (2006). *Parenting partnerships in culturally diverse child care settings: A care provider perspective*. (Australian Institute of Family Studies, Research Paper No. 36). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Child Care Choices

A consortium involving Macquarie University's Psychology Department and the Institute of Early Childhood, Charles Sturt University's School of Teacher Education and the Institute received an Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage grant in 2002–2004 to conduct a longitudinal study designed to investigate the use of multiple and changeable care and the impact of such care on children, families and care providers. The New South Wales Department of Community Services is an industry partner on this project. In its first wave of data collection, undertaken in 2002–2003, 689 families with children aged 0 to 3 years were recruited to the study. Early in the current reporting period the third wave (2004–2005) of data collection was completed. Analysis of the data is continuing, and a number of conference presentations and papers have arisen as a result. Although the NSW Department of Community Services provided additional funding to extend the study in a further two projects (The Longitudinal Extension to eight years of the Child Care Choices Research Project and The Child Care Choices of Indigenous Families Research Project), the Institute's involvement is limited to the analysis and presentation of findings from the first three waves of data collection.

Conference presentations

da Silva, L. (2005, July). *The value of child care in early childhood*. Paper presented at the 2nd Child Care Parents Forum, St George and Sutherland Independent Child Care Centres Network, Sydney, NSW.

da Silva, L. (2005, October). *Home-based learning activities among Australian children*. Paper presented at the 40th Australian Psychological Society annual conference, Melbourne, Vic.

da Silva, L., Wise, S., Webster E., & Sanson, A. (2006, February). *Findings from the "Efficacy of Early Childhood Interventions" report*. Paper presented at the National Investment for the Early Years Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Bowes, J., Taylor, A., Ungerer, J., Harrison, L., Wise, S., Sanson, A., & Simpson, T. (2006, May). *Parents managing care*. Paper presented at the 2nd Australian Parenting Conference, Adelaide, SA.

Children and Family Life

The Children and Family Life study examines the family environment, development and wellbeing of 1,248 children aged between 5 and 12 years growing up in intact-couple, single-parent, step and blended families. It was designed to provide information about the family life and development of children reared in non-traditional family forms.

In the current period, data have been screened and cross-checked to detect invalid or incorrect values, and to make corrections, and derived variables have been developed to describe family types and other explanatory and outcome variables. A plan for the multivariate analysis was also developed, which involves two distinct stages.

In the first stage, analysis will be conducted to identify differences across family types on measures such as parenting, parent–child relationships, the co-parental relationship, work and family balance and financial strain. In the second stage, analyses will be focused on assessing the relationship between key aspects of the family environment and family structure and measures of child adjustment. This should provide information as to whether the physical composition of families affects development over and above intra-familial factors, and should emphasise where interventions and supports need to be targeted to enhance family and child wellbeing. The greater part of Stage 1 analyses were completed in the current period, preparing the foundation for dissemination and Stage 2 analyses.

Conference presentation

Hand, K., Alexander, M., & Wise, S. (2005, 21 July). *Experience of work and family balance for parents in different family forms*. Paper presented at the National Social Policy Conference, University of New South Wales, Sydney.

External representation

Edwards, B., & Hayes, A. (2006, 28 February). Attendance at the Early Childhood Policy Forum, presented by Dr Jack Shonkoff (2006 Creswick Foundation Visiting Professor in Early Childhood, Department of Human Services). Organised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne, Vic.

Follow-up Study of Children Conceived through Donor Insemination

Recruitment of families involving a child conceived using donor insemination technology continued through the current reporting period, increasing the sample size to 81 families. Data are being collected on behalf of Professor Gabor Kovacs from Monash Medical School, Box Hill Hospital (renowned for his contribution to the IVF research field from its early days), using instrumentation developed for the Children and Family Life Study. This will permit comparison of “donor insemination families” with other family groups involved in the Children and Family Life Study on key demographic, family functioning and child adjustment measures. Information is also being collected by Professor Kovacs about “openness” concerning children’s conception, so that its relationship to child and family wellbeing can be assessed. Findings to emerge from this study are expected to have implications for families accessing donor insemination technology and the children who are born as a result.

Families Caring for a Person with a Disability

The Institute has been funded by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs to investigate the perceived impact on carers and their family of caring for a person with a disability. This collaborative project with staff from the Disability Carers Branch will document the physical, emotional, social and financial impact on families of caring for a relative with a disability. Labour force participation and the effect of caring on family relationships within the family will also be a focus of the study. Another aim of the project is to compare families caring for relatives with a disability, and those with no disability, to further our understanding of the particular issues involved in caring for relatives with a disability.

One thousand carers of a person with a disability will be interviewed via computer-assisted telephone interviews in the forthcoming financial year. The interview schedule has been developed through examination of the literature and consultation with experts from around Australia and explores the physical, emotional, social and financial impact on families of caring for a relative with a disability. Family relationships and labour force participation will also be a focus of the interview.

National Child Protection Clearinghouse

The National Child Protection Clearinghouse (NCPC) serves as an interchange point for information, research and initiatives supporting work in the field of child abuse and neglect prevention. The Clearinghouse is funded by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA). The Clearinghouse has operated from the Institute since 1995, where it collects, produces and distributes information and resources, conducts research, and offers specialist advice on the latest developments in child abuse prevention, child protection and associated violence. The goal of the Clearinghouse is to inform policy, practice and research into child abuse prevention and child protection.

Research

The Clearinghouse undertakes primary and secondary research projects related to child abuse prevention, child protection and out-of-home care. A number of Clearinghouse research reports are available for downloading from the Clearinghouse website (www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/keyreports.html).

As part of its contract with FaCSIA, the Clearinghouse completed three research projects in 2005–2006:

1. Research commissioned by FaCSIA on behalf of the Australian Council for Children and Parenting (ACCAP) investigating the recruitment, assessment, retention, training and support of Indigenous carers.
2. Research commissioned by FaCSIA on behalf of the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council (CSMAC) National Foster Plan Working Party in which a structured literature review was completed to summarise Australian research into out-of-home care identified in the Cashmore and Ainsworth (2004) audit of Australian out-of-home care research.
3. Research commissioned by FaCSIA on behalf of the CSMAC Child-Safe Organisations Working Party in which: (a) a literature review of research into risk factors for maltreatment in organisations and risk assessment tools for use in child-related employment screening was conducted; and (b) the quality of service data for describing the nature and prevalence of maltreatment in Australian organisations was investigated.

In addition, the Clearinghouse completed two external research contracts:

1. National Audit of Child Protection Research in Australia 1995–2004, auspiced and funded by the newly established Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia to produce an audit of research being conducted in the areas of child protection, child maltreatment and child abuse prevention.

2. Indigenous Community Development Evaluation, commissioned by the Telstra Foundation in which 15 Indigenous community development projects funded by the Telstra Foundation were evaluated and “early learnings” documented.

The Clearinghouse also commenced two additional external contracts in 2006:

1. Indigenous out-of-home care project for the Australian Council for Children and Parenting to encourage the “diffusion of innovation” in Indigenous out-of-home care services through the culturally appropriate dissemination of findings from the research commissioned by FaCSIA on behalf of the Australian Council for Children and Parenting investigating the recruitment, assessment, retention, training and support of Australian Indigenous carers.
2. Research utilisation project commissioned by the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia: a two stage survey to examine the barriers and facilitators of research utilisation by policy makers and practitioners in the fields of child abuse prevention and child protection.

As part of its contract with FaCSIA, the Clearinghouse also undertakes an ongoing national comparison of child protection systems. The aim of project is to provide appropriate national comparison of key elements of policy, legislation and service delivery across the states and territories in matters relevant to child protection services and the prevention of child maltreatment.

Knowledge base

The Clearinghouse currently holds 13,125 records in its catalogue database related to child abuse and neglect. The catalogue is widely accessible via the Institute’s website, while access to Australian Family & Society Abstracts is via subscription to the RMIT’s Informit service.

Communication

The knowledge base is used to generate a number of communication activities including the National Child Protection Clearinghouse website, an information and advisory service, and the production and dissemination of child abuse prevention and child protection related publications.

Website

The Clearinghouse website continued to be well used during the year, with 1,398,657 hits and 706,870 downloads (including 410,725 downloads of NCPA publications). The electronic Resource Sheets continue to be very popular, as do the Clearinghouse’s Child Abuse Prevention Issues and Newsletters. Although most requests were received for resources that were full text publications, other areas of the website continue to be well utilised including the bibliographies and information on getting help. Information on getting help includes such topics as reporting child abuse, government departments responsible for dealing with child protection, Internet safety advice, help lines for children and parents, counselling services, guidelines for police checks for people working with children and adolescents, and links to other sites that provide information on child abuse prevention.

Information and advisory service

A key role for the Clearinghouse is to provide information advice on child abuse prevention and child protection policy and practice issues to the Australian Government, state and territory governments, agencies and practitioners working in the field.

A free information and advisory help desk is staffed to answer general queries by telephone, fax, mail, email, or in person. Experienced reference librarians respond to queries by drawing on the extensive resources of the library and in-house databases, and can also access external online and Internet services, when necessary. Requests for more specialised information are referred to NCPC research staff. This may involve detailed analysis and interpretation of current issues in child protection and child abuse prevention, informing program development and professional practice, and providing advice on research methodology and program evaluations.

Clearinghouse staff draw on the knowledge base to provide advisory services. The use of the information and advisory service remains high, with a total of 327 enquiries coming to the Clearinghouse 'help desk'. In addition, there are 607 subscribers to the childprotect email discussion list at 30 June 2006. This provides service providers, government agencies, policy makers and researchers with a venue to discuss research, policy and practice issues and facilitates discussion and dissemination of good practice knowledge. In the reporting period, there were 342 messages posted on childprotect.

As a key aspect of their advisory function, Clearinghouse research staff participate in workshops, conferences and related activities, presenting papers and seminars and carrying out other promotional work as required. They also sit on advisory groups and committees committed to child abuse prevention or the improvement of the child protection system. Staff are also regularly invited to give postgraduate seminars at Deakin University to clinical PhD students on child abuse and neglect, family violence and diversity issues as they relate to couple and family therapy.

Publications

The Clearinghouse produces web-based and hard copies of both Child Abuse Prevention Issues (which focus on a topic of particular relevance to the field), and Child Abuse Prevention Newsletters (which include feature articles plus information on the latest publications and resources, developments in policy or legislation, and forthcoming conferences and workshops).

The Child Abuse Prevention publications are disseminated quarterly through a network of approximately 6,000 stakeholders (which includes centralised distribution to child protection workers in every state and territory and key non-government organisations). The Clearinghouse also produces various web-based publications.

Newsletters

Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter, Vol. 13, No. 2 (August 2005)

Child Abuse Prevention Newsletter, Vol. 14, No. 1 (February 2006)

Publications

Buckle, S., Lancaster, S., Powell, M. B., & Higgins, D. J. (2005). The relationship between child sexual abuse and academic achievement in a sample of psychiatric adolescent inpatients. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, *29*, 1031–1047.

Cashmore, J. A., Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Scott, D. A. (2006). Recent Australian child protection and out-of-home care research: What's been done? *Children Australia*, *31*(2), 4–11.

Fish, E., Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2005). *A new name for Munchausen Syndrome by proxy: defining fabricated or induced illness by carers*. (Child Abuse Prevention Issues No. 23). Melbourne: National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: www.aifs.gov.au/nch/issues/issues23.html.

Holzer, P. J., Higgins, J., Bromfield, L. M., Richardson, N., & Higgins, D. J. (2006). *The effectiveness of parent education and home visiting child maltreatment prevention programs*. (Child Abuse Prevention Issues No. 24). Melbourne: National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: www.aifs.gov.au/nch/issues/issues24.html.

Electronic publications

Higgins, J., Bromfield, L. M., Richardson, N., & Higgins, D. J. (2006). Child abuse prevention: What works? The effectiveness of home visiting programs for preventing child maltreatment. *Research Brief No. 2*, available at www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/researchbrief/rb2.html.

Holzer, P. J., Bromfield, L. M., Richardson, N., & Higgins, D. J. (2006). Child abuse prevention: What works? The effectiveness of parent education programs for preventing child maltreatment. *Research Brief No. 1*, available at www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/researchbrief/rb1.html.

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, September). Mandatory reporting of child abuse. *National Child Protection Clearinghouse Resource Sheet No. 3*, available at: www.aifs.gov.au/nch/sheets/menu.html.

Submissions

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, August). Submission on the *Development of a charter of rights for children and young people in care: A discussion paper*. Advocate for Children in Care, Victorian Department of Human Services.

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, September). Submission on Victorian child protection exposure draft legislation.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, October). Submission to ABS on Confidentialised Unit Record File (CURF) 2005 Personal Safety Survey.

Commissioned reports

Adams, R. M., Bromfield, L. M., Holzer, P. J., & Higgins, D. J. (2005, December). *The nature and extent of child maltreatment in Australian organisations: Findings from service data*. A report to the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council Child Safe Organisations working group. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Beyer, L., Higgins, D., & Bromfield, L. (2005, July). *Understanding organisational risk factors for abuse: A literature review*. A report to the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, commissioned by the Department of Family and Community Services. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, September). *Indigenous out-of-home care success factors: An interim report on effective dissemination strategies*. A report to the Australian Council of Children and Parenting, commissioned by the Department of Family and Community Services. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Higgins, D. J. (Ed.) (2005, September). *Indigenous community development projects: Early Learnings Research Report, 2*, Melbourne: Telstra Foundation.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, October). *Confidential report to the Telstra Foundation Board on evaluation of indigenous community development projects for the Early Learnings Research Report Volume 2, 2005*. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Higgins, D. J., Adams, R. M., Bromfield, L. M., Richardson, N., & Aldana, M. S. (2005, August). *National audit of Australian child protection research 1995–2004: Final report*. A report commissioned by the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Higgins, D. J., & Bromfield, L. M. (2005, December). *Out-of-home care in Australia: Disseminating messages from research*. A report to the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council National Foster Plan Working Group. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, October). *Enhancing out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people*. A report to the Australian Council of Children and Parenting, commissioned by the Department of Family and Community Services. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Conference presentations

Bromfield, L. M., & Aldana, M. S. (2005, 29–31 July). *Kinship care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: Issues for practice*. Paper presented at the Australian Foster Care Association, National Foster Care Conference, Alice Springs, NT.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, 29–31 July). *ACCAP Indigenous Foster Care Project: Best-practice models in out-of-home care*. Paper presented at the Australian Foster Care Association, National Foster Care Conference, Alice Springs, NT.

Higgins, D. J., & Bromfield, L. M. (2005, 29–31 July). *Understanding what child protection data mean: A national comparison*. Keynote address presented at the Australian Foster Care Association, National Foster Care Conference, Alice Springs, NT.

Richardson, N. (2005, 29–31 July). *Finding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander foster carers: What does the literature say about best practice?*. Paper presented at the Australian Foster Care Association, National Foster Care Conference, Alice Springs, NT.

Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2005, 5–6 October). *Child maltreatment and policing in the 21st century*. Workshop presented at the Australian Police Summit, Melbourne, Vic.

Bromfield, L. M., Richardson, N. R., & Higgins, D. J. (2006, 14–16 February). *Kinship care: A culturally appropriate practice framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*. Paper presented at the 10th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, Wellington, NZ.

Higgins, D. J., Richardson, N. R., & Bromfield, L. M. (2006, 14–16 February). *Australian Indigenous communities and out-of-home care: Models of best practice*. Paper presented at the 10th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, Wellington, NZ.

Higgins, D. J., Richardson, N. R., & Bromfield, L. M. (2006, 14–16 February). *Facilitating child abuse prevention research and models of best practice: The role of a national clearinghouse for child protection research*. Poster session presented at the 10th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, Wellington, NZ.

Bromfield, L. M., & Ryan, R. (2006, 21–23 May). *National comparison of entry-level training for statutory child protection workers*. Paper presented at the first national conference for the Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners, Sydney, NSW.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Higgins, D. J. (2005, 28–29 July). *Update on the progress of the Indigenous out-of-home care project and literature review of out-of-home care research*. CSMAC Foster Care working group meeting, Alice Springs, NT.

- Higgins, D. J., & Bromfield, L. M. (2005, 29 August). *Update on progress of Indigenous out-of-home care project*. Australian Council of Child and Parenting committee meeting, Melbourne, Vic.
- Bromfield, L. M. (2005, 3 November). *Child maltreatment prevention programs: A review of the evidence*. Paper presented at the NSW Health, Sax Institute Research Exchange, Sydney, NSW.
- Higgins, D. J. (2005, 17 November). *Understanding different forms of child maltreatment: The degree to which young people experience abusive/neglectful behaviours and their effects*. Seminar presented for the Department of Community Services, Glebe, NSW.
- Higgins, D. J., & Bromfield, L. M. (2005, 18 November). *Implications of the national comparison of child protection systems for a national approach for child protection*. Panel discussion with the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council National Approach for Child Protection Working Group, Melbourne, Vic.
- Higgins, D. J. (2005, 21 November). *Update on neglect*. Keynote address presented to launch a statewide training program about child abuse funded by the South Australian Department of Children and Education Services (run by The Australian Childhood Foundation in conjunction with the National Research Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse at Monash University), Adelaide, SA.
- Higgins, D. J. (2005, 24 November). Participation in a panel discussion at the Inaugural National Oral Health Promotion Forum, Melbourne, Vic.
- Higgins, D. J. (2006, 23 January). *Child protection: A national overview*. Invited address, followed by facilitation of a roundtable forum on current issues and possibilities for a national framework. Co-hosted by the Centre for Vulnerable Children and Families (University of Western Australia) and the WA Ministerial Advisory Council for Child Protection, Perth, WA.
- Higgins, D. J., & Bromfield, L. M. (2006, 24–25 January). *Child maltreatment: Myths & realities; signs & interventions*. Workshop at the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia Child Protection Conference, Fremantle, WA.
- Higgins, D. J. (2006, 24–25 January). *What's all the fuss about child abuse? Schools and child protection*. Keynote address at the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia Child Protection Conference, Fremantle, WA.
- Bromfield, L. M. (2006, 17 February). *The National Child Protection Clearinghouse: Lessons learned in research and dissemination*. Workshop at the New Zealand Families Commission, Wellington, NZ.
- Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2006, 27 March). Participation in a panel discussion on the definition and identification of child neglect at the "Child Neglect: Towards Collaboration between Practitioners, Policy Makers and Researchers" forum, co-hosted by the Victorian Parenting Centre and Australian Centre for Child Protection and held at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Vic.
- Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2006, 19 May). *Ten years of out-of-home care research: Evaluating the Australian evidence-base*. Paper presented at the Out-of-Home Care Research Forum: From Research to Action, jointly convened by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, the Community Services Ministers' Advisory Council, and the Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia, Brisbane, Qld.
- Higgins, D. J. (2006, 14–15 June). *Research and clearinghouse functions of NCPC*. Presentation at the "Show and Tell" joint workshop between the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, ACT.
- Higgins, D. J. (2006, 27–28 June). *Child protection, sexual assault, communities, families and caring*. Presentation at a joint workshop for the Australian Institute of Family Studies and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra, ACT.
- Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2006, 27–28 June). *A national approach to child protection: How close are we?* Paper presented at the National Child Protection Forum hosted by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Bromfield, L. M. (2005, 25–26 August). Attendance at the Australasian Statutory Child Protection Learning and Development Group biannual meeting, Darwin, NT.

Higgins, D. J., Bromfield, L. M., & Richardson, N. (2005, 6 September). Attendance at the launch for National Child Protection Week. Hosted by the Victorian Department of Human Services on behalf of NAPCAN, Melbourne, Vic.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, 15–16 September). Attendance at the ARACY: “Thinktank” on child welfare issues, Melbourne, Vic.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, 22 September). Attendance at the CSMAC Child Safe Organisations working party meeting to provide an update on research projects, Brisbane, Qld.

Hayes, A., Higgins, D. J., & Burchill, M. (2005, 10 October). Attendance at the launch for Indigenous Community Development Projects: Early Learnings Research Report, Vol. 2. Philanthropy Australia Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Bromfield, L. M. (2005, 10–12 October). Attendance at the Centre for Excellence Conference in Child and Family Welfare Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2005, 13 October). Attendance at the “Children with High Support Needs in Alternate Care: New Approaches to the Prevention of Placement Breakdown” forum. Victorian Department of Human Services Child Protection Forum, Melbourne, Vic.

Bromfield, L. M., & Holzer, P. (2005, 23 November). Attendance at a forum on the Victorian Children’s Bill presented by Judge Jennifer Coate. Victorian Association of Restorative Justice, Melbourne, Vic.

Higgins, D. J. (2005, 24 November). Participation in a panel discussion at the Inaugural National Oral Health Promotion Forum, Melbourne, Vic.

Holzer, P., & Fish, E. (2006, 27 March). Attendance at the “Child Neglect: Towards Collaboration between Practitioners, Policy Makers and Researchers” forum. Co-hosted by the Victorian Parenting Centre and Australian Centre for Child protection and held at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne, Vic.

Bromfield, L. M. (2006, 9–10 March). Attendance at the Australian Statutory Child Protection Learning and Development Group biannual meeting, Canberra, ACT.

Bromfield, L. M. (2006, 21–23 May). Attendance at the first national conference for the Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners, Sydney, NSW.

Holzer, P. J. (2006, 13 June). Attendance at the Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre’s annual family law forum “Now be Reasonable: Preparing for the New Family Law System”, Melbourne, Vic.

Bromfield, L. M., & Higgins, D. J. (2006, 20 June). Attendance at the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare afternoon tea with Minister Sheryl Garbutt to welcome Cathy Humphreys, the inaugural Child Welfare Chair based the University of Melbourne.

Member, Qld Department of Child Safety Research Advisory Group (D. Higgins).

Member, National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (NAPCAN) Victoria – Advisory Group (D. Higgins).

Member, Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) Reference Group (D. Higgins).

Member, Australasian Statutory Child Protection Learning and Development Group (L. Bromfield).

Representative, Australian College of Child and Family Protection Practitioners (L. Bromfield).

Representative, CSMAC National Approach to Child Protection Working Group (D. Higgins and L. Bromfield).

Editorial Board Member, *Child Maltreatment*. Journal of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) (D. Higgins).

Editorial Board Member, *Journal of Religion & Abuse: Advocacy, Pastoral Care & Prevention*. (D. Higgins).

Editorial board member, *Communities, Children & Families Australia*. Journal of the Australian College of Child and Family Protection Practitioners journal (L. Bromfield).

External reviewer, *Child Abuse & Neglect*. Journal of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect (ISPCAN) (D. Higgins).

External reviewer, *Children Australia: Special issue on children leaving care* (L. Bromfield).

THEME 3 FAMILIES AND WORK

Research in this theme is concerned with two broad areas: (i) how families combine caring responsibilities and paid employment and what assists families in successfully combining both sets of responsibilities; and (ii) the relationship between labour market transitions and family factors. Research has focused on the ways in which family members combine their family responsibilities and paid employment and the impacts of these arrangements on family relationships and the wellbeing of family members. There has also been research on the return to work decisions of mothers following child bearing and the ways in which families manage this transition; the effects of differences in access to a range of family-friendly employment arrangements on parental wellbeing; and the implications of mothers' wage expectations on their labour supply decisions.

Family and Work Decisions

The Family and Work Decisions (FAWD) project is a study of the work decisions of families (particularly mothers) with dependent children. This project is being conducted in partnership with the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

The project adopts several approaches to understanding this issue. The first strand of the project has involved the analysis of existing secondary data and several papers have been published. The second strand involved reviewing the international experience of welfare reform relating to families and labour force participation and the implications for Australian social policy.

The third strand focuses on people's knowledge and understanding of the income support system, the way in which it interacts with paid employment and decisions about labour force participation, living arrangements, and family formation. In order to answer these questions, a survey of 2,405 partnered and lone mothers has been undertaken and in-depth qualitative interviews with 61 mothers have been completed. A number of conference and research papers analysing the survey data and qualitative interviews have resulted and more are planned for the forthcoming financial year. These include papers on how mothers view and understand the income support system, how important are financial considerations in a mother's decision to work or not, what are the key determinants of a mother's decision to seek employment and the extent to which long-term health problems impact on a mother's employment decision.

Publications

Gray, M., & Renda, J. (2006). *Reservation wages and the earning capacity of lone and couple mothers: Are wage expectations too high?* (Australian Institute of Family Studies Research Paper No. 37). Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies. Available at: www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/series.html#research.

Parents on Low Income Study

This three-year Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Project was undertaken in collaboration with the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) and the Australian National University. This project (formerly the Dynamics of Low Income, Welfare Reliance, and Changes in Family Structure of Parents with Dependent Children Project) has built a new 10-year longitudinal database, from FaCSIA administrative records and supplementary surveys, for low-income parents with dependent children. One of the supplementary surveys that has been attached to the longitudinal database is the Family and Work Decisions survey that was undertaken by the Institute in late 2002. The linking of this and other supplementary surveys to longitudinal FaCSIA administrative records will allow for the ongoing analysis of the dynamics of, and interrelationships among, changes in family structure, income and welfare reliance.

Although the project was formally completed in March 2006, the resulting linked data sets will provide an ongoing resource for researchers and policy makers to evaluate the impacts of existing government income support and work-related programs. The Institute has recently commenced preliminary work on this data by considering the welfare pathways that respondents in the FAWD study have taken since they were interviewed in 2002.

Work and Family Interactions

This project area is ongoing and contains much of the research (other than the Family and Work Decisions project) into families and their relationship with the labour market, including work and family issues, family-friendly workplace issues and transitions into and out of the labour market.

This financial year saw the publication of a second article for *Family Matters* (August 2005) based on analysis of the Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey, NSW, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in 2000. It considers how couple and lone mothers use family-friendly work practices in caring for their children. (An earlier article, published in *Family Matters* in May 2005, considered the differential use of family-friendly work arrangements as they relate to the care of adults compared to care of children).

The membership of a senior researcher in an international network of scholars around the issue of parental leave policy and practice and attendance at an international seminar in October 2004 has resulted in a publication reviewing parental leave policies and research in an international context.

Researchers working on this project were invited to a Work and Family workshop in Sydney in November. The workshop was sponsored by the Academy for the Social Sciences in Australia and organised by Dr Marian Baird (University of Sydney) and Associate Professor Gillian Whitehouse (University of Queensland). The theme of the workshop was "Taking care of work and family: Policy agendas for Australia" and it brought together leading researchers from around Australia as well as one from the UK in order to present their latest research. The invited Institute researchers were able to present results on work-to-family spillover using the newly available Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) dataset. Some of this work was later published in the December edition of *Family Matters*.

The work-to-family spillover analysis based on LSAC data and analysis based on the ABS Managing Caring Responsibilities and Paid Employment Survey, NSW was also presented by the Deputy Director (Research) at a policy forum in Canberra in May titled “Work, Families and Wellbeing”. The forum was jointly sponsored and organised by the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health and Families Australia, with keynote addresses from Dr Willem Adema (Project head, OECD Bosses and Babies reviews) and Prof. Linda Duxbury (Carleton University). The forum brought together researchers and policy makers to consider the latest research and policy options in the work and family area. The Institute Director also presented other Institute work at this forum.

There has also been analysis conducted on the employment arrangements of women whose partner is not participating in the labour market and how these arrangements differ from the experiences of other women. This work was presented by a team member at the 2005 HILDA research conference.

Publications

Alexander, M. (2005). Country notes: Australia. In F. Deven & P. Moss (Eds.), *Leave Policies and Research: Reviews and country notes* (Population and Family Study Centre (CBGS) Working Paper 3/2005, pp. 41–52). Brussels: Population and Family Studies Centre (CBGS).

Available at: www.cbgs.be/repository/WD_2005_03.pdf.

Conference presentations

Baxter, J. (2005, 18–23 July). *Workforce transitions following childbearing in Australia*. Paper presented at the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population XXV International Population Conference, Tours, France.

Baxter, J. (2005, 27–29 July). *Transitions to work after kindergarten*. Paper presented at the National Employment Services Australia Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Baxter, J. (2005, 29–30 September). *The employment dynamics of women with not-employed partners*. Paper presented at the 2005 HILDA research conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Baxter, J., & Alexander, M. (2005, 17–18 November). *Work-to-family spillover among partnered parents of pre-school age children*. Paper presented at the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia workshop *Taking care of work and family: Policy agendas for Australia*, Sydney, NSW.

Alexander, M. (2006, 27 March). *Work-to-family spillover among partnered parents of pre-school age children*. Paper presented to the National Centre for Women’s Health in Society, Melbourne, Vic.

Hand, K., (2006, 12 April). *Work and Family: the Family’s Perspective*, Guest lecture, School of Social Sciences, La Trobe University.

Gray, M., Alexander, M., & Baxter, J. (2006, 4–5 May). *Work and Family*. Presentation at the Work, Families and Wellbeing forum, Canberra, ACT.

Alexander, M. (2006, May). Guest lecturer on “Love, Family and Sexuality – A comparative perspective” in the Sociology Program, University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Hand, K. (2005, 25 October). Participation in the Work and Caring Roundtable. Convened by the National Diversity Think Tank and Diversity Council of Australia, Sydney, NSW.

Alexander, M., Edwards, B., & Hand, K. (2005, 28–29 November). Attendance at the Social Policy Research Workshop. Organised by the Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, ACT.

Hand, K. (2005, 13 February). Attendance at the “What Fathers Want” Roundtable. Convened by the Work/life Association Inc., Melbourne, Vic.

Hand, K. (2006, 9 May). Participation in the Challenges of integrating working and caring in industrialised societies – Reframing the issues and implications for business. Convened by the National Diversity Think Tank and Diversity Council of Australia, Melbourne, Vic.

Alexander, M., Baxter, J., & Renda, J. (2006, 22–23 June). Attendance at the New Standards for New Times Conference. Organised by the Centre for Applied Social Research. Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, Melbourne, Vic.

Member, Advisory Group for the HREOC Striking the Balance report (M. Alexander).

Member, International network on parental leave policy and research (coordinated from University of London, UK) (M. Alexander).

Judge, 2005 BCA/ACCI Work and Family Awards (M. Alexander)

Partner Investigator, ARC Discovery Project: Negotiating the Life Course: Education, Work, Family and Lifestyle Behaviour in Australia (J. Baxter).

Mothers, fathers, children and work

The objective of this project was to provide new information on, and improve our understanding of, issues relating to work and family balance for parents of infants and children aged 4 to 5 years using Wave 1 of the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children. The research is intended to inform policy development in this area and it examined the following three central themes:

- Employment arrangements of mothers and fathers;
- Child care and work arrangements; and
- Work and family balance and family wellbeing.

The work was commissioned in December 2005 and a final report was provided to the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs in June 2006.

Commissioned report

Baxter, J., Gray, M., Alexander, M., Strazdins, L., & Bittman, M. (2006, June). *Mothers and fathers with young children: Paid employment, caring and wellbeing*. Paper commissioned by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Australians Working Together

The Institute originally entered into a contract with the then Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS) in March 2004, to undertake the Australians Working Together (AWT) study. This was an evaluation of the impact of compulsory Centrelink interviews and activity requirements introduced by the government in September 2003. Respondents were Parenting Payment customers who had a youngest child aged 13–15 years and had signed a formal Participation

Agreement with Centrelink in February/March 2004. This evaluation sought their views, and those of their youngest child, on how the required (compulsory) activities – such as paid work, voluntary work, training or study – were affecting themselves or their family.

This study included a literature review and the conduct of a two-wave longitudinal study to evaluate the impact of the new activity requirements for Parenting Payment customers on themselves and their children aged 13–15 years. Fieldwork involved telephone interviews with 60 parents and 60 children (paired interviews). Wave 1 and Wave 2 telephone interviews were conducted by a contracted field-work agency, approximately nine to ten months apart, in mid-2004, and early 2005 respectively.

Since the study was commissioned, responsibility for income support payments to persons of working age had been transferred to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR). A commissioned report and formal presentation of findings to DEWR was provided in June 2005 and the report was published by DEWR in October 2005.

Commissioned report

Alexander, M., Baxter, J., Hughes, J., & Renda, J. (2006, February). *Evaluation of the impact of activity requirements for Parenting Payment customers on their children aged 13–15 years*. A report commissioned by the then Department of Family and Community Services and then transferred to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Available at [www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/Publications/Programme Evaluation](http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/Publications/ProgrammeEvaluation).

THEME 4 FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Research in this area focused on the connections between the health and wellbeing of families and their residential communities. This link is fundamental for families are the building blocks of communities and rely on community resources for meeting the family's needs.

Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault

The Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) functions as the sole national repository for current information and research on sexual assault in order to assist service providers, policy makers and others working in the field to improve responses to, and ultimately reduce the incidence of, sexual assault in the community. ACSSA is funded by the Office for Women in the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, under the Women's Safety Agenda.

ACSSA has been operated by the Institute since 2003. The focus of the Centre is on all forms of sexual assault, particularly the sexual assault of women and girls over 15 years of age (the most commonly reported victims/survivors); and adult survivors of child sexual assault. The main functions of the centre are: to facilitate access, particularly electronic access, to national policy relevant data to inform strategies to more effectively prevent and respond to sexual assault; to establish a comprehensive evidence-base, and provide information and advice on research and best practice approaches for interventions in response to sexual assault; to stimulate debate among policy makers, academics and service providers about the most effective strategies to prevent, respond to, and reduce the incidence of sexual assault; and to raise awareness of sexual assault and its impact on the Australian community.

Functions and activities

Key indicators of ACSSA's performance during the reporting period have included: the production of seven publications on issues relevant to the sexual assault field; further development of information, resources and the capacity of the ACSSA website; substantial increases in membership of ACSSA's electronic news "alert" and Good Practice database, as well as increased subscriptions to the ACSSA mailing list; and responding to a significant growth in individual research enquiries. ACSSA has also finalised its primary research project analysing the characteristics and outcomes of police investigations into sexual assault.

ACSSA publications

ACSSA has three types of publications that aim to report on developments in the sexual assault field. They include:

ACSSA Aware, a quarterly newsletter that includes feature articles on current topics in sexual assault, stakeholder profiles, alerts for upcoming workshops and conferences, and a literature review of the latest sexual assault research from Australian and international sources that has been obtained for the collection.

ACSSA Wrap, a new series that provides a brief review of contemporary issues and resources relevant to key stakeholders in the area of sexual assault.

ACSSA issues papers that present a more in-depth investigation of some of the critical gaps that remain in our understanding of, and responses to, sexual violence.

During the reporting period, ACSSA has prepared four issues of the newsletter (*ACSSA Aware* (No. 9–12), two issues of *ACSSA Wrap*, and one issues paper (No. 5).

ACSSA distributes its publications to more than 7,000 subscribers.

Research and enquiry service

The research and enquiry service provides stakeholders with information, specialist advice, and research expertise on current issues in the field of sexual assault. The service incorporates a wide range of important functions including: literature searches and literature scoping; statistical analysis and interpretation of current trends and issues that impact on our understanding of sexual assault; advice on best practice approaches and/or interventions. It also reviews and critically evaluates reforms to policy and legislation relevant to sexual assault.

Research enquiries received by ACSSA since its inception in July 2003 have been recorded in an enquiry log. This allows the centre to record and monitor: types of enquiries received, demographic details about the organisation making the enquiry; details of the response provided; time spent responding to the enquiry; and the enquirer's membership status on the mailing list. The enquiry log allows monitoring of stakeholder needs that can then be used as the basis for isolating the most important topic areas for publications.

In the reporting period, ACSSA received more than 240 enquiries with an average of 50 minutes spent responding to each query. The time spent reflects the detailed literature searches conducted in responding to research enquiries.

Between 1 July 2005 and 30 June 2006 almost one third (31 per cent) of the enquiries received related to research questions and requests for resources on a wide range of topics including: how the legal system responds to victims/survivors of sexual assault; details about current legislation and requests for legal resources in the field of sexual assault; best practice intervention and prevention models; sexual violence against older women; myths about sexual assault; trafficking; sexual offender treatment programs; characteristics of male offenders; asylum seekers and sexual assault; sexual assault within the school environment; sexual harassment in the workplace; links between mental health and sexual assault; and system's responses to adult survivors of sexual assault. The centre also received a number of requests for statistics on the incidence and prevalence of sexual assault (5 per cent).

Government departments (federal, state and territory), sexual assault services, medical and health services, police, tertiary institutions, libraries and the media are regular users of the research and enquiry service.

Good Practice Programs and Responses for Sexual Assault

Since 2003, ACSSA has been developing a national collection of Good Practice Programs and Responses for Sexual Assault. The collection aims to provide a valuable resource to service providers and policy makers by highlighting examples of good practice in service provision from each state and territory, in the spirit of sharing information and experiences across the sector. Currently ACSSA has 38 examples

of good practice programs available for browsing in the collection. The most recent additions, include: *What the Law Says about Sex*, a brochure aimed at providing education to prevent child abuse in the remote Aboriginal communities of Western Australia; Service Assisting Male Survivors of Sexual Assault (SAMSSA), a Canberra service, one of the few service providers that offer counselling and support for male victims/survivors; and *Anyone's Story – Understanding and Responding to Adult Sexual Assault*, a contemporary teaching video for health and police educators developed by a partnership between the New South Wales Education Centre Against Violence (ECAV) and NSW Police.

The information provided on each item in the database includes a description of the program/initiative and the aspects of good practice it demonstrates, particular groups targeted by the program, information about the philosophical framework, and research behind the program and details of any publications produced.

ACSSA website

The ACSSA website (www.aifs.gov.au/acssa) aims to improve access to current information and resources through: identifying new developments in the field; monitoring and recording the research, policy and practice literature; providing links to online documents; and publishing ACSSA's publications online. Pages on forthcoming conferences and events, and links to Australian and international organisations working to address sexual assault are regularly updated. There is also online access to the ACSSA collection, located in the Institute's library.

Now in its third year of operation, visits to the ACSSA website have continued to increase, with more than 218,900 pages/documents accessed (up from 159,000 in 2004–2005). *ACSSA Briefing*, issues papers, *ACSSA Wrap* and articles from the newsletter *ACSSA Aware* were in demand, with more than 79,500 downloads, followed by visits to the online resource collection of bibliographies and online documents with more than 30,100 accesses. Other features of the website that were well used were the Good Practice Programs Database and current statistical information on sexual assault.

Subscribers to the *ACSSA-alert* fortnightly electronic newsletter of coming events, new publication announcements, and other items of interest to the field have continued to increase and now number 475 at June 30 (up from 300 last year).

Library collection

During the year 541 items of interest or relevance to ACSSA were added to the library collection, a total now of 1,619 (up from 1,078 last year). Items include journals, books and research reports, government documents, conference proceedings, audiovisual material (videos and kits), training material/modules, as well as ephemera (for example posters, postcards, booklets). An emphasis is given to obtaining material in an online format wherever possible and items include both Australian and overseas material. Items are obtained from a wide range of sources, including commercial publishers, government departments, non-government organisations and service providers.

Materials held in the collection can be located in the Institute's online library catalogue via a link on the ACSSA website. They are also available for browsing in the Institute's library, which is open to the public by appointment during business hours. Otherwise, items may be borrowed through the interlibrary loan system.

Networking, conferences and outreach

In the last 12 months, ACSSA has presented at 15 different events, conferences, forums and seminars focusing on issues such as law reform, criminal justice responses, approaches to prevention, sexual assault and disabilities, and intimate partner rape. Particular highlights were the presentations given at: the Western Australian forum titled *Sex, Laws and Videotapes*, where the ACSSA Manager provided the keynote address on sexual assault law reform, following the forum being opened by the Western Australian Attorney-General, the Hon Jim McGinty; the joint workshop presented by ACSSA team members to service providers affiliated with the Western Australian Federation of Sexual Assault Services; the lecture presented by ACSSA staff at the University of Melbourne's Department of Criminology on "Trafficking in Women for Sexual Exploitation"; and participation in the forum on *Improving the Criminal Justice Response to Sexual Assault*, hosted by the Victorian Department of Justice, where the ACSSA Manager was asked to speak on a plenary panel alongside three other international delegates about the evolution of law reform in Victoria and participate on a discussion panel that included the Chief Judge of the County Court, the Chief Magistrate and current members of the judiciary about best practice pathways for responding to sexual assault.

ACSSA team members also regularly promote the services provided by ACSSA through presentations, and information sessions aimed at increasing the understanding and use of the services available through the centre.

Primary research and analysis

In October 2004, the Institute succeeded in tendering for a project funded by the Victorian Office of Women's Policy, on behalf of the State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault. Staff from ACSSA, in collaboration with RMIT commenced work on the project, *Analysis of Police Investigations into Sexual Assault*, in November 2004.

The principal aim of this project was to examine what kinds of factors appear to be influencing the outcomes of rape investigations, especially where police or adult victim survivors decide to terminate the investigation. Specifically, the project will examine relevant Victorian police information in order to: identify the characteristics of cases that are finalised as "complaints withdrawn", "no offence disclosed", and "offender processed", including characteristics related to the offence, the victim, the offender, the relationship between the victim and the offender and the time between the offence and the report to police; and distinguish, to the extent that this evidence is available, the kinds of factors that influence the finalisation of sexual assault reports as "complaints withdrawn", "no offence detected/disclosed" and "offender processed" where the complainant is from a diverse group (Indigenous, culturally and linguistically diverse, rural and women with disabilities).

The findings of the project will be used to contribute to an evidence-base that can inform improved police investigations into sexual offences and specifically, police training and the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Sexual Assault. This will help ensure that all reports of sexual assault are thoroughly investigated and will ultimately improve access to the criminal justice system.

The data collection began in April 2005 and was completed by September 2005. A draft report on the research findings was submitted to the Victorian Office for Women in November 2005. Since then, ACSSA staff have been working with the Office for Women, Victoria Police and other representatives on the State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault to respond to feedback on the draft report. A final report has now been submitted.

Publications

Chung, D., Leary, P., & Hand, T. (2006). *Sexual violence offenders: Prevention and intervention approaches*. (Issues Paper No. 5). Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Fergus, L., & Keel, M. (2005). *Adult victim/survivors of childhood sexual assault*. (ACSSA Wrap No. 1). Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Fergus, L., & Keel, M. (2005). Is prison obsolete?. *Aware: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault Newsletter No. 9*, Melbourne: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Keel, M. (2005). Working with adolescents in the education system to prevent sexual assault. *Family Matters*, 71, 36–39.

Commissioned reports

Heenan, M., & Murray, S. (2006, in press). *Reported rapes in profile: A problem of attrition*. A report to the Victorian Office of Women's Policy (OWP) on behalf of the State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Conference presentations

Fergus, L. (2005, 14–16 September). *Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation*. Paper presented at the Women's Experiences of Violence Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Keel, M. (2005, 14–16 September). *Overview of ACSSA functions and research priorities*. Presentation at the Women's Experiences of Violence Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Heenan, M. (2005, 7–9 December). *Challenges from a sexual assault perspective*. Paper presented at Women's Safety Strategy Conference, Adelaide, SA.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Keel, M. (2005, 1 July). *Overview of ACSSA functions and research priorities*. Showcasing Seminars, hosted by the Office for Women (Department of Family and Community Services) in Victoria on programs and projects funded by the Partnerships against Domestic Violence and the National Initiative to Combat Sexual Assault, Melbourne, Vic.

Heenan, M. (2005, 4 October). *Challenges from a sexual assault perspective*. Keynote address presented at Sex, Laws and Videotapes Forum. Organised by the Western Australian Federation of Sexual Assault Services, WA.

Heenan, M., & Keel, M. (2005, 5 October). *ACSSA's roles and functions, and discussions around priority service areas including: the importance of developing collaborative service models across sexual assault, mental health and domestic violence*. Joint workshop to service providers affiliated with the Western Australian Federation of Sexual Assault Services, WA.

Fergus, L. (2005, 18 October). *Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation*. Guest lecture presented at the University of Melbourne's Department of Criminology, Melbourne, Vic.

Keel, M. (2005, 21 October). *Walking the talk: Family violence and sexual assault in Indigenous communities*. Presentation at the Capacity Building Program for Indigenous Health and Welfare Workers, Reichstein Foundation, Melbourne, Vic.

External representation

Child, J., Fergus, L., & Keel, M. (2005, 20–22 July). Attendance at the Is Prison Obsolete? Conference, Melbourne, Vic.

Fergus, L., & Keel, M. (2005, 14–16 September). Attendance at the Women's Experiences of Violence Conference, Sydney, NSW.

Fergus, L. (2005, 15 September). Co-host of the Anti-Sexual Violence Event, Melbourne, Vic.

Heenan, M. (2005, 25 October). Attendance at the roundtable seminar on "Justice, equity and diversity: The criminal justice response to sexual violence in Indigenous communities". Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, ACT.

Heenan, M. (2005, 8 November). Attendance at the launch of the "Respect and Responsibility – Creating a safe and inclusive environment for women at all levels of Australian football" policy developed by the Australian Football League, Melbourne, Vic.

Member, State-wide Steering Committee to Reduce Sexual Assault (M. Heenan).

Director, Victorian Women's Trust Ltd., Melbourne (M. Heenan).

Member, Advisory Committee for Personal Safety Survey, Australian Bureau of Statistics (M. Heenan).

Member, Advisory Committee, Violence Against Women Community Attitudes Project, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (M. Heenan).

Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia

The Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA) aims to improve access to current information and resources to inform policy, practice and research in the fields of early intervention and childhood development. The Clearinghouse has an emphasis on initiatives that develop and promote improved services and practices for young families, the early learning and care of children, support for families and parents, and child friendly communities.

The primary function of CAFCA is to provide information and advice to projects funded under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) and to policy makers, researchers and practitioners in the fields of early intervention and childhood development. In addition to this core role, CAFCA supports the National Evaluation of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004–2009.

The Clearinghouse is funded by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs through the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004–2009. The Clearinghouse has been operated by the Australian Institute of Family Studies since 2005. It continues the work of the Stronger Families Learning Exchange (SFLEX) in the first phase of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2000–2004. CAFCA with its new emphasis and directions, officially commenced in July 2005.

Research collection and library

The Clearinghouse is supported by the services and collection of the Institute's library. The Clearinghouse, through the library, brings together a comprehensive collection of national and international literature including research on topics such as early intervention, childhood development and strengthening families and communities, as well as research methodology and policy developments. The

practice initiatives collection covers the research and policy literature on community development and capacity building, early childhood, families, and programs that support families. Key journal titles, research reports and government reports, and audiovisual materials are also included in the collection. The library catalogue is available free of charge from the Institute's website.

A Catalogue and Help Desk service is provided for clients who wish to access information from the library collection and databases. Types of assistance sought included the provision of information on evaluation programs, ethics guidelines for non-government organisations and assistance with searching the Web for resources.

CAFCA Website

The website provides information on the SFCS national evaluation; links to Australian and overseas websites; electronic versions of publications; questionnaires relating to the national evaluation and news of forthcoming conferences and events. For the financial year 2005–2006 the CAFCA website recorded 42,151 hits and 27,769 pages were accessed or downloaded.

The Evaluation section of the site was well used with more than 6,000 downloads of pages including the *Evaluators' National Newsletter*, questionnaires for services users and agencies, and questions and answers about the evaluation process. Interest was also shown in the resources pages on the site (3,552 downloads), the Stronger Families Strategy projects page (1,485 downloads), and the recently developed (May 2006) Stronger Families in Australia (SFIA) respondent website (405 downloads).

Electronic discussion lists

CAFCA provides an interactive, moderated medium for open use by individuals funded under the SFCS, the early childhood and community development sectors and policy makers. There are two distinct moderated discussion lists: *CAFCA-chat* and *e-evaluate*.

CAFCA-chat provides a forum for the discussion of research, policy and practice issues relevant to the SFCS and the broad early childhood and community development sectors. Designed to facilitate discussion and disseminate knowledge, *CAFCA-chat* highlights innovative and effective practices and informs on relevant literature, training opportunities and forthcoming events. The web information page for *CAFCA-chat* (the email discussion and announcements list) has received 1,800 visits resulting in 150 subscribers as at 30 June 2006.

e-evaluate is a moderated list that focuses on the SFCS National Evaluation. More specifically, *e-evaluate* is a forum for Local Evaluators involved in the National Evaluation to offer each other peer support during the evaluation process. The list gives evaluators opportunities to share information, resources and case studies as well as providing a forum for problem solving and for building and maintaining a peer network.

Additionally, *e-evaluate* allows for the timely dissemination of knowledge and resources specific to Local Evaluators, such as advice on evaluation instruments, relevant literature, training opportunities and forthcoming events. The list had 100 registered members as at 30 June 2006.

Publications

The Stronger Families Learning Exchange (SFLEX), the funded body from which CAFCA was born, produced its final *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin* in late 2005. This seventh spring edition of the Bulletin was printed and distributed to 6,600 readers. Responses received from a reader survey highlighted the relevance and usefulness of the publication to its many readers:

“As a lecturer in early childhood this is a valuable resource.”

“It’s helpful for keeping in touch as I work in the country and have little access to conferences, network meetings, etc.”

A six-monthly newsletter, the *Evaluators’ National Newsletter*, is published and electronically distributed to those working under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy and the National Evaluation. The newsletters contain information regarding the Strategy, progress updates on the National Evaluation, links to the latest publications, resources, developments in relevant policy or legislation, and information about training, conferences and workshops.

Evaluators’ National Newsletter, edition 1 (December 2005)

Evaluators’ National Newsletter, edition 2 (June 2006)

Networking and outreach

CAFCA staff gave presentations at various conferences and workshops about the services to be provided by CAFCA as well as reporting on the activities of the National Evaluation (see Conference presentations and Other presentations for details).

Evaluation of Relationships Australia Victoria FUN for Kids program

The main purpose of the evaluation is to assess the impact of the FUN for Kids program on participating fathers and their families. The project will have a primary focus on the father’s perspective. However, it will also include the views from immediate family members and service providers. The study will seek to understand the impacts of the program on the participating fathers, their family relationships and access to community networks. The study will also consider the evaluations of other father’s programs in Australia.

Publications

Cheney, H. (2005). *Communities for Children Initiative*. (Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin No. 7). Melbourne: Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Cheney, H., Mallick, J., & Fish, E. (Eds.). *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin* No. 7. Melbourne: Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Haviland, M., Johnson, K., Orr, L., & Lienert, T. (2005). *Being an insider and/or outsider*. Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin No. 7. Melbourne: Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Turner, C., & Bredhauer, K. (2005). *Nice noise*. (Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin No. 7). Melbourne: Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Commissioned report

Cheney, H., & Oke, N. (2006, April). *FUN for Kids Progress Report*. A report prepared for Relationships Australia, Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Stronger Families and Communities Strategy National Evaluation

A National Evaluation consortium has been formed to evaluate the second phase of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (SFCS) 2004–2009. The Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC) at University of New South Wales (UNSW) is the lead agency and is joined by the Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA), based at the Institute.

The National Evaluation seeks to capture the extent to which the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy 2004–2009 contributes to better outcomes for children and families and improved capacities of communities to achieve this. The Strategy contains four strands: Communities for Children (CfC), Invest to Grow (ItG), Local Answers (LA) and Choice and Flexibility in Child Care. The evaluation addresses the first three. The evaluation seeks to establish a strong evidence-base for the development of effective programs and services in the early childhood sector in Australia. The outcomes framework used in the National Evaluation concords with the National Agenda for Early Childhood.

The SFCS National Evaluation Framework was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders and published in December 2005.

The Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA) has prime carriage for the following National Evaluation activities:

Stronger Families in Australia

Stronger Families in Australia (SFIA) is the primary mechanism for collecting data on child, family and community outcomes in Communities for Children sites. In the first wave, SFIA will collect data on approximately 2,000 families in 10 Communities for Children sites and five contrast sites. The study will be conducted in three waves to enable a longer-term follow-up of families. The first wave of data is being collected during June and July 2006, with subsequent waves planned for early 2007 and 2008.

During the year, SFIA entered a significant stage with the commencement of the first wave of data collection. Using the Centrelink Family Tax Benefit database, the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs selected families from a large number of postcodes across Australia, and then sent letters to these families inviting them to take part in the study. After a three-week opt-out period, contact names and addresses were then forwarded to the data collection agency.

During the first part of 2006, all Wave 1 study instruments and processes were tested on a preliminary sample and in June 2006, after intensive training of 60 interviewers, recruitment of 2,000 families to the study commenced. Primary evaluation interests include the health of young families, the support available to families and parents, the early learning and care of children and the extent to which communities are child-friendly. At 30 June, more than 1,000 face-to-face interviews have been conducted.

Some of the major documentation relating to this study completed since the study commenced in November 2005 includes the study framework, which was completed in December 2005 after extensive consultation with FaCSIA; the final instrument and accompanying rationale documents; sampling and methodology specifications; establishing the respondent web page; and the SFIA Training Manuals Fieldwork Documentation and Security Policy.

Promising Practice Profiles

One of the key objectives of Promising Practice Profiles (PPPs) is to identify “what works” in early childhood and early intervention and to identify, validate and disseminate promising practice arising from the Strategy. Promising practice will be identified through a call for submissions from sites and projects and from Local Evaluators. These will be evaluated against established criteria, validated and then published and disseminated. The criteria have been developed in consultation with a wide range of researchers and practitioners who are involved with the SFCS. The first call for submissions was in July 2006.

Themed Studies

The purpose of the Themed Studies is to explore particular topics in depth. These studies will enhance understanding of “what works” by exploring in more depth “why” and “how” things work. These studies will cover the three SFCS program areas covered in the evaluation – Communities for Children, Invest to Grow and Local Answers. Some of the studies will be undertaken in partnership with Local Evaluators.

Playgroups National Evaluation Framework

The National Evaluation consortium for the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy was contracted to the design and develop an Evaluation Framework for the Playgroups Program of the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. This project involved consultation with key playgroup organisations and has the potential to inform policy development and enhance the well-being of children and families by improving services funded under the Playgroups Program. The Playgroups Evaluation Framework has been designed in accordance with the National Agenda for Early Childhood.

Commissioned reports

Cheney, H., Johnstone, R., Hayes, A., & Gray, M. (2005, December). *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, National Evaluation Framework*. A report prepared for the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Cheney, H., & Keel, M. (2006, June). *Playgroups Program Evaluation Framework*. A report prepared for the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Cheney, H., & Soriano, G. (2006, January). *Stronger Families in Australia Indigenous Briefing Paper*. A report prepared for the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Johnstone, R. (2005, December). *Stronger Families in Australia Sampling Briefing Paper*. A report prepared for the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Johnstone, R. (2006, January). *Stronger Families in Australia Pilot Review*. A report prepared for the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Conference presentations

Hayes, A. (2005, 25–26 August). *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy: National Evaluation*. Paper presented at the Communities for Children NGO Forum, Sydney, NSW.

Cheney, H. (2005, 25–26 August). *Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia*. Paper presented at the NGO Forum, Sydney, NSW.

Cheney, H. (2006, 1–2 March). *Communities and Families Clearinghouse*. Paper presented at the Communities for Children NGO Forum, Adelaide, SA.

Johnstone, R. (2006, 1–2 March). *Stronger families in Australia*. Paper presented at the Communities for Children NGO Forum, Adelaide, SA.

Other (non-conference) presentations

Cheney, H. (2005, 6 October). *CAFCA support to ItG projects*. Presentation at the Workshop on the National Evaluation for Invest to Grow, Sydney, NSW.

Cheney, H. (2005, 7 October). *Evaluation Communication Strategy and Next Steps*. Presentation at the Workshop on the National Evaluation for Communities for Children, Sydney, NSW.

Cheney, H. (2006, 9–10, 11–12 May). *Overview of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. I-view Interviewer Briefing, Melbourne, Vic. & Sydney, NSW.

Johnstone, R. (2006, 9–10, 11–12 May). *Overview of the Stronger Families in Australia Evaluation*. I-view Interviewer Briefing, Melbourne, Vic. & Sydney, NSW.

Soriano, G. (2006, 9–10 May, 11–12 May). *Ethical guidelines in research*. I-view Interviewer Briefing, Melbourne, Vic. & Sydney, NSW.

External representation

Cheney, H. (2005, 12 August). Attendance at the “Closing the Know–Do Gap” National Conference. Organised by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth, Sydney, NSW.

Cheney, H. (2005, 10 August). Attendance at the guest lecture by Naomi Eisenstadt, Director of the Sure Start Unit, UK on “Tackling disadvantage in early childhood”. Organised by the Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra, ACT.

Cheney, H. (2005, 28–30 September). Attendance at the Family Services Australia National Conference, Adelaide, SA.

Cheney, H., & Johnstone, R. (2006, 7 February). Attendance at the guest lecture by Professor James Heckman, Director, Economic Research Centre, University of Chicago on “Productively Arguments for Investing in Young Children”. Organised by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, ACT.

Cheney, H., & Edwards B. (2006, 14 March). Participation at the “Dilemmas and Delights of Measuring Outcomes for People with a Disability: a Think Tank”, Scope Vic, Melbourne, Vic.

Adams, R., Keel, M., & Soriano, G. (2006, 8 May). Attendance at the “Building Communities: Engaging Early Childhood Services and Schools” seminar. Organised by the Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne, Vic.

Adams, R., Johnstone, R., & Soriano, G. (2006, 19–20 June). Attendance at the Communities in Control Conference. Hosted by Our Community, Melbourne, Vic.

Member, Advisory Group, *Footprints in Time* – Longitudinal Study for Indigenous Children (LSIC), Department of Families and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (H. Cheney).