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AGENCY OVERVIEW



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Institute overview

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) is a Melbourne-based Australian Government statutory agency established in February 1980 under the Australian *Family Law Act 1975*. Staff of the Institute are employed under the *Public Service Act 1999*. At 30 June 2008, staff numbered 64 people, excluding the Director.

Machinery of government changes

As a result of machinery of government changes in 2007, AIFS moved from the then Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) portfolio to the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) portfolio. A “Statement of Expectations” and “Statement of Intent” between the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and the Director, AIFS, was developed and signed in June 2008 (see pp. 96–8)

Enabling legislation

The Institute was established under Part XIVA of the *Family Law Act 1975*. As described in s114B(2) of Part XIVA of the Act, the functions of the Director are:

- (a) to promote, by the conduct, encouragement and coordination of research and other appropriate means, the identification of, and development of understanding of, the factors affecting marital and family stability in Australia, with the object of promoting the protection of the family as the natural and fundamental group unit in society; and
- (b) to advise and assist the Minister in relation to the making of grants, and with the approval of the Minister to make grants, out of moneys available under appropriations made by the Parliament, for purposes related to the functions of the Institute and the supervising of the employment of grants so made.

Role and functions

The Strategic Plan 2006–08 was approved by the then Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs on 24 May 2006. The key roles and functions of the Institute are to:

1. Conduct high-quality research on a broad range of policy-relevant issues regarding families in Australia.
2. Inform and influence policy development in areas relevant to family wellbeing.
3. Promote and lead public understanding and debate about factors affecting family functioning and wellbeing.
4. Identify and communicate current and emerging issues in family research, policy and practice.
5. Maintain and strengthen our role as the national centre for research on families.

Organisational structure

The Director is responsible for providing the overall leadership of the Institute and shaping its future. He is supported by two Deputy Directors—Deputy Director (Research) and Deputy Director (Corporate and Strategy)—who work together to lead teams of General Managers (GMs) responsible for the management of the day-to-day work of the Institute in meeting its strategic directions (see Figure 2.1).

General Managers (Research) oversee teams of research staff who work on a range of contracted and internally initiated projects, including three longitudinal studies and four clearinghouses. The longitudinal studies are: Australian Temperament Project (ATP); Family Pathways: The Longitudinal Study of Separated Families; and *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* (LSAC). The clearinghouses are: Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA); Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse (AFRC); Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia (CAFCA); and National Child Protection Clearinghouse (NCPC). Other major projects include the suite of family law reform evaluation projects, the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy National Evaluation, and the Families Caring for a Person with a Disability project.

Research staff members are supported by the Corporate and Strategy area, which provides library, publishing, finance, information technology (IT), external relations, human resources (HR) and other administrative services.

Outcome and output structure

The Institute operates within the Australian Government's outcome and output framework. This report is based on the outcome structure published in the 2007–08 *Portfolio Budget Statements* (see Figure 2.2). The Institute has one outcome and one output:

- Outcome 1—Inform government, policy makers and other stakeholders on factors influencing how families function
- Output 1.1—Information and advice on factors influencing how families function

All Institute activities are directed to achieving the outcome. There are also a number of specific performance indicators, detailed in Chapter 3, Table 3.1 (pp. 16–18).

The Institute's research performance is detailed and discussed in Chapter 3, its management accountability performance in Chapter 4, and its financial performance in Chapter 5.

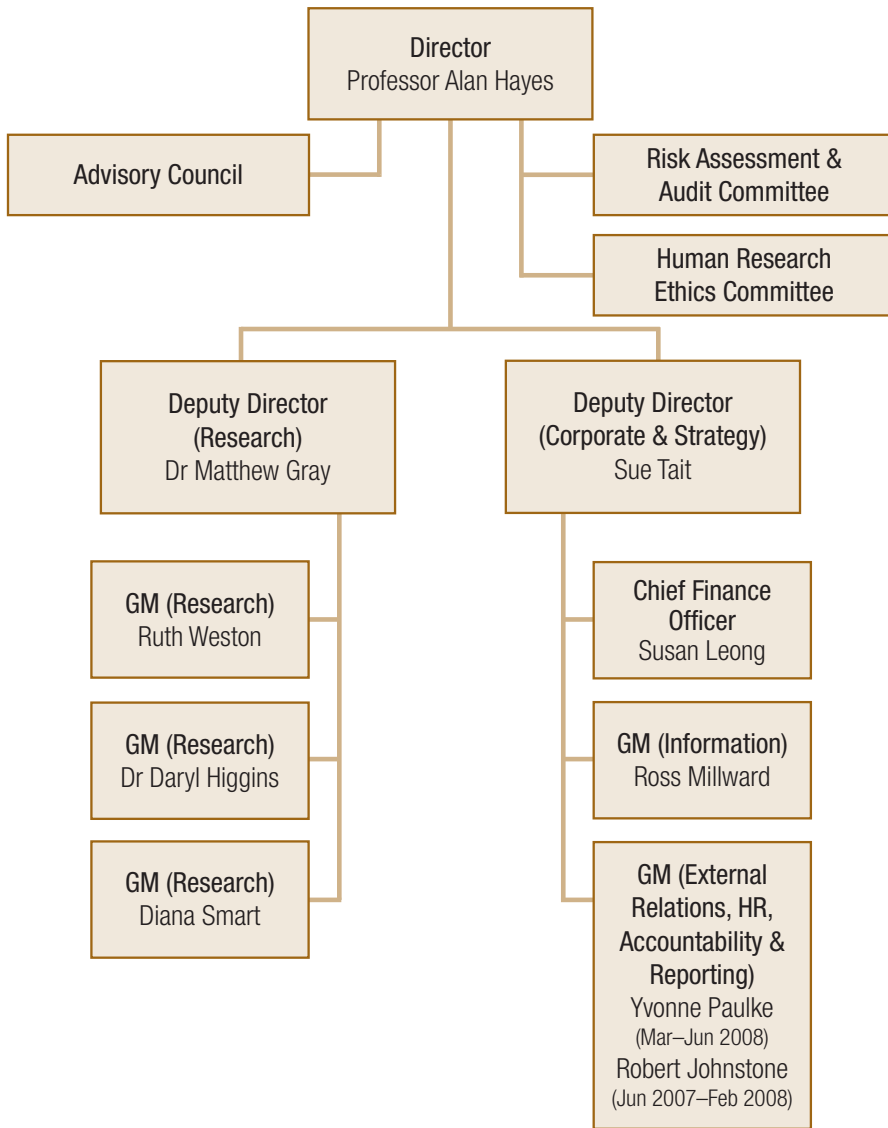


Figure 2.1 Structure of the Australian Institute of Family Studies at 30 June 2008

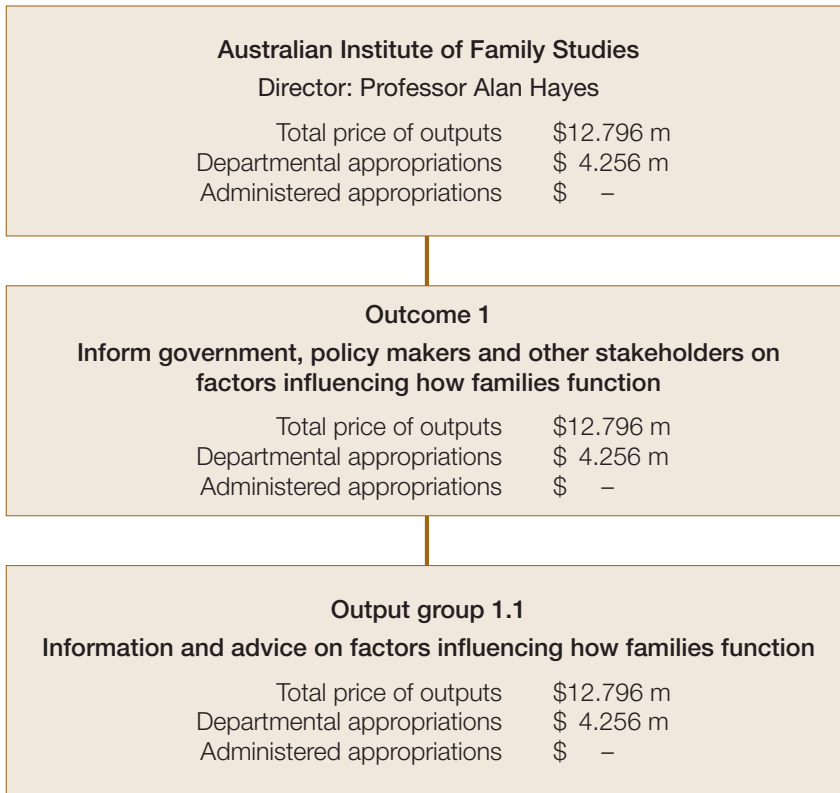


Figure 2.2 Contributions to outcomes framework