



## DIRECTOR'S REPORT

### HARRY MCGURK

**T**his year is the United Nations International Year of Tolerance. Goodbye Family, Hello Tolerance? Not quite! Although the International Year of the Family (IYF) formally came to an end at midnight on 31 December 1994, activities associated with IYF are scheduled to continue well into 1995 and, hopefully, beyond.

One such activity was the United Nations Inter-regional Meeting of National Coordinators for the International Year of the Family, held at Bratislava in Slovakia from 3-7 February 1995. One hundred and thirty-five delegates and representatives from 72 countries, including Australia, together with a number of observers from non-governmental organisations and sections of the UN, gathered in Bratislava to consider the impact on families throughout the world of activities generated under the aegis of International Year of the Family, and to prepare a report on the Year for presentation to the UN General Assembly later in the year.

There was impressive consensus at Bratislava as delegates from all around the world repeatedly referred to IYF as a year-long event within a continuing process. Thus, there was consensus also over the extent to which the Year, for its ultimate success, required effective follow-up. This was reflected, for example, in the report to the meeting tabled by the delegate from the Commonwealth of Australia where it was

stated: 'The final test of the IYF will be in the long term. In Australia, the IYF has been seen by the Government as an opportunity to promote discussion in the community on a diverse range of issues concerning families. The final outcome of this discussion and debate will be the Australian Government's Agenda for Families. The Agenda will be a statement which will set out the future directions and framework for Commonwealth Government policy for family-related . . . programs.'

Thus, in Australia as elsewhere, it would be premature to arrive at an overall verdict on the effectiveness of the International Year of the Family in promoting the well-being of the nation's families.

I was present in Bratislava for the launch of the *International Directory of IYF Research Activities*, prepared and published by the Institute on behalf of the UN Secretariat for IYF with support from the Commonwealth Government of Australia. The Directory is described in more detail elsewhere in this issue of *Family Matters*. Suffice it to say here that it was universally acclaimed at Bratislava as a highly significant contribution to the International Year by the Institute.

**I** am pleased to report that following a national recruitment and selection process two new executive appointments were made recently. John Shelton joined the Institute as Business Manager at the beginning of February 1995 and David de Vaus took up the post of Research Manager at the beginning of March. With these appointments, the Institute now has a complete senior management team in place for the first time since October 1993.

John Shelton has a background in financial management. He trained as an accountant and prior to joining the Institute worked as Business Manager at the Department of Defence, Logistic Command - Army. Before this he held appointments as Manager of Administration with the City of Broadmeadows, and as Director of Administration of the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board. John's experience in these various roles will be of great value

to the Institute in the streamlining of our management and administrative processes.

David de Vaus joins the Institute from La Trobe University where he was Associate Professor and Head of the School of Sociology. David is an acknowledged expert in social survey methodology and has had extensive prior experience of research management in such areas as the sociology of religion, gender values and family relationships. He is the author of a highly regarded textbook on survey research methods (*Surveys in Social Research*). A more recent monograph reporting his research on inter-generational relationships in adulthood (*Letting Go: Relationships between Adults and their Parents*) has also been well reviewed internationally.

It is a pleasure to welcome David and John to the Institute. Their addition to the management team comes at a critical time as we work on the development of a Corporate Plan to carry us into the twenty-first century. I intend to announce details of the Institute's Corporate Plan and Research Program in the next issue of *Family Matters*.

**I**t is also a pleasure to be able to report that the transfer of the National Child Protection Clearing House from the Australian Institute of Criminology in Canberra to this Institute, foreshadowed in the December 1994 issue of *Family Matters*, has now been successfully completed. The Clearing House has been up and running since the beginning of the year and is already attracting a considerably increased volume of traffic to the Institute's Family Information Centre, where it is now located (see boxed inset elsewhere in this issue). Readers of *Family Matters* who would like to learn more about the work of the Clearing House or receive the current Newsletter should contact Judy Adams in the Family Information Centre.

**F**inally, I am delighted to be able to report that the Institute's Board of Management has a new Presiding Member.

The appointment of Ms Ann Sherry was announced at an Institute function on 19 May by the Minister for Human Services and Health, Senator, the Hon. R.A. Crowley. Ms Sherry was warmly welcomed by the Director, the Board and Institute staff.

Ms Sherry said she was delighted to be involved with the Institute, which she saw as being 'at the forefront of family research'.

Ms Sherry has extensive experience in family policy development and program delivery. In previous positions she has worked as Director of Children and Family Services in the Primary Care Division of Victoria's Department of Health and Community Services, and also as Head of the Office of the Status of Women. She is currently Chief Manager of the Policy Division of Westpac Banking Corporation.

I am greatly looking forward to working with Ms Sherry in her new role.

*Harry McGurk*



## Australian Family Research Conference

**The 5th Australian Family Research Conference, hosted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, will be held in southern Queensland from 27-29 November 1996.**

As in past years, the 1996 Australian Family Research Conference will provide a valuable forum for a variety of people, from child care workers and educators to policy-makers, health professionals, and service providers in the areas of social work, human resources and sociology.

If you would like to be considered as a possible presenter at the Conference, please forward a 250-word abstract of your paper along with full

professional details to: Dr Kathleen Funder, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Institute of Family Studies, 300 Queen Street, Victoria 3000 Australia.

Papers on any aspect of family research including family trends, family life and relationships, children, family policies and economics, support programs and family law will be welcome.

**Full details of the Conference and an official Call for Papers will be published in the 1995 Spring/Summer edition of *Family Matters*.**