

The Institute's core three-year Research Plan is now in its third year and is reaching the stage where important new findings will emerge throughout the year. Over the last 12 months a great deal of effort has been put into collecting new data; the next 12 months will bear the fruit of these efforts with the intensive analysis and reporting of results.

Data collection has been completed for the first stage of the *Australian Families Across the Life Course Study*, the *Housing Across The Life Course Project* (for further details see below), and the *Later Life Families Project*. These data are already providing valuable information about work patterns and preferences of women, marital satisfaction, retirement planning and experiences, the impact of divorce on family support in later life, and the possible impact of housing policies on the housing situation of Australian families. Data collection for the *Australian Divorce Transitions Project* is almost complete and the project promises to provide new information about the contemporary impact of divorce on families and the effect of legislative changes in this area.

In addition to collecting these new sets of data we have continued to analyse existing data sets to address our core research concerns. The *Australian Living Standards Study* continued to be used for work on child care and indicators of the wellbeing of children and adolescents, while Australian Bureau of Statistics data are being analysed to provide further insight into working hours of families and intergenerational helping.

Research results will be published in books, working papers and *Family Matters* articles progressively over the next 12 months.

The past few months have represented an extremely successful period for the



DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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Institute from the point of view of the award of new research and related contracts.

Youth suicide

A major new contract provides the Institute with resources for the period until 30 June 1999 to develop and implement a communication and dissemination program for the Commonwealth funded National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy (for further details see page four).

Youth suicide is a major cause of death among young people in Australia (see the article by David de Vaus in *Family Matters* no.44, Winter 1996, pp.42–45). The Commonwealth Government has invested \$32 million in the National Youth Suicide Prevention Strategy in a major attempt to eliminate such tragic loss of life through the development of innovative models of counselling, support and outreach services for young people and their families.

The contract was awarded competitively to the Institute by Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services. Work in connection with this contract will be carried out primarily by the Institute's Family Information Centre; the staff of the Centre have extensive experience of work of this nature gained in the context of running the

National Child Protection Clearing House. Some of the more clinically oriented work in connection with the information program will be carried out collaboratively with the Centre for Adolescent Health at the University of Melbourne with whom the Institute has formed a partnership for this purpose.

Indigenous parents

A further major contract has been awarded to the Institute, also by the Department of Health and Family Services. This new funding has been awarded to resource an extension of the Institute's *Parenting-21 Project* to include indigenous communities of Cape York and the islands of the Torres Strait.

Parenting-21 explores how contemporary parents are bringing up the Australian children who will live most of their lives in the 21st century. The project focuses particularly upon child rearing practices and attitudes and how these relate to cultural beliefs about the nature of childhood; of concern also are the ways in which parents pass on their values to their children. Input will be obtained from young people, as well as adults. The new contract will enable the development of culturally sensitive and appropriate ways to explore these issues with parents from some of the country's indigenous communities.

This extension to *Parenting-21* will be implemented in collaboration with the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine at the Cairns Campus of the University of Queensland.

Child protection services

The Institute has also been awarded two inter-related contracts by the Victorian Department of Human Services. These relate to the evaluation of the effectiveness of a range of modifications to the delivery of child protection services to families, currently being trialled in three regions of the State of Victoria.