

Families Australia

Families Australia is a newly established national peak body, funded through the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, that aims to represent the interests of families, young people and children in Australia.

The founding members of *Families Australia* are the Association of Services Supporting Australia's Families, Australian Foster Care Association, and Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia. With the first board consisting of representatives from these organisations, as well as the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), Families Australia has exciting potential to pursue issues such as child abuse prevention on a national level. A Working Group was established from the three founding members and SNAICC which now form an interim Board

that will operate until the first Annual General Meeting (due to take place in the later half of 2002).

Families Australia is keen to be representative of the sector, and to this end general and associate membership will be open to organisations and people interested in the field of family policy. It is hoped that at the first Annual General Meeting of Families Australia, the new Board will be elected from people nominated by a wide-ranging membership of organisations with an interest in the impact of policy, services and practices on families and children.

Families Australia is committed to ensuring that its policy focus is as broad as possible and includes policies which impact on families, young people and children nationally. Its focus will

also include policies related to non-government organisations that support families and/or children and young people. This broad focus is perceived to be very important given the diversity of family forms in Australia today, the significance of extended families to the health and well being of families, and the complexities of the current split of responsibilities between Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments.

The main objectives of *Families Australia* are:

- to be a leading organisation in the field of family policy by working in collaboration with other stakeholders;
- to work towards recognition of, and support for, the needs of families, young people and children;
- to provide a strong national voice and advice to government on issues that impact upon families, as well as facilitate the voices of families regarding family policy;

- to improve policy, programs and service delivery with a particular focus on the interface between Commonwealth and State/Territory responsibilities;
- to advocate for adequate resources and ensure that family policy reflects the diversity of family forms, addresses disadvantaged circumstances experienced by many families, and has a primary emphasis on the best interests of children and young people; and
- to initiate or undertake research that contributes to improved knowledge, policy, programs, and service delivery practice.

Any individual or organisation interested in becoming a member of *Families Australia* or who would like to obtain further information, can contact *Families Australia* Executive Officer, Anne Marie Mioche on (02) 6262 5705 or 0408 64 5443; or email: amioche@familiesaustralia.org.au