



CORPORATE OVERVIEW

C O R P O R A T E O V E R V I E W

In 2001–2002 the Australian Institute of Family Studies continued to deliver a range of quality services and products for its stakeholders. Research findings were disseminated via the Institute’s research journal *Family Matters*, and in Institute research reports and research and briefing papers, articles in refereed journals, conference presentations, workshops and seminars, as well as through the Institute’s extensive library and clearinghouse services.

Commonwealth and State Government agencies, researchers, family service providers, the media and the public sought Institute information and input across a wide range of policy areas. The widespread use of Institute materials confirms the value placed on the Institute’s work by stakeholders and the wider community.

The year 2001–2002 was a time of significant growth and expansion for the Institute, underpinned by the development of a new strategic planning framework and a new Research Plan.

Anniversaries

The calendar year 2001 marked three anniversaries of relevance to the Institute. These were the Centenary of Federation, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Family Court of Australia, and the twenty-first anniversary of the commencement of operation of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

A special, extended edition of *Family Matters* that celebrated these anniversaries was published in December 2001. A number of major articles looked back over one hundred years of change affecting Australian families; there was an essay on the establishment of

the Family Court; and an 18-page feature provided the history and role of the Institute since its inception in 1980. An 1884 engraving of families on Brighton Beach near Melbourne on the cover of this special edition, reproduced courtesy of the Mitchell Library, reflected the historical nature of much of the content. Details from that engraving are reproduced on the cover of this Annual Report.

As the *Family Matters* feature pointed out, since its inception in 1980 the Institute has made a major contribution to research evidence and to public and policy understanding of the changing nature of Australian families. It has identified factors affecting family stability and wellbeing, and has highlighted the impacts of social and demographic change, as well as government policies, on families. In so doing, it has played an important role in the formulation of policy.

To mark twenty-one years of key research, the Institute also released a bibliography (as no. 6 in its Research Report series) of all material it had published to December 2001. *Collected Works 1980–2001* is testament to the Institute’s research involvement in virtually every aspect of interest concerning families – from issues to do with children and adolescents through to the aged, and material relating to family formation, families and the law, marriage and re-partnering, families and society, and family policy.

Institute conference

Planning for the Eighth Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference progressed during the year. The conference, to be titled *Steps forward for families: Research, practice*

and policy, will be held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre on Southbank on 12–14 February 2003. Conference announcements and a call for papers will appear in the Winter edition of *Family Matters*, and otherwise disseminated in September 2002.

New research plan

Preparation of a new Research Plan was completed towards the end of the year. The *Research Plan 2002–2005*, designed to guide the Institute's activities over the next triennium, is intended to be a "living document" and responsive to emerging research and policy issues. It seeks to ensure that the Institute's research continues to be at the forefront of thinking on the family in Australia. The Research Plan was developed in consultation with other researchers and institutions in Australia. The plan sets a number of key research priorities so that the Institute's activities will produce high quality, evidence-based results that will advance the objectives of the Institute.

With this plan the Institute is seeking to make a positive contribution to policy development and informed debate on issues of critical and far-reaching concern for all families. At the same time, the Institute is always interested to receive further comment on its planned activities, and to receive suggestions for areas of possible research on emerging issues of concern.

It is envisaged that, following endorsement by the Director and the Board of Management, the plan will be disseminated to key Institute stakeholders early in the next financial year.

Research activities

The primary focus of the Institute's research program has been a continuation of work defined in the 1999–2001 Research Plan

and the development and implementation of major new research projects, a number of which commenced during the year.

Existing projects

Work across the three Institute research programs advanced successfully over the year.

In the *Children and Parenting Program*, data collection for the Child Care in Cultural Context study has been completed and the project is now in the analysis and dissemination phases. Analyses of previous waves of data and planning for and collection of the 13th wave of data for the Australian Temperament Project have been completed. Children in Need, a collaboration with Anglicare Victoria, has been completed.

An Australian Research Council Linkage grant is funding a collaborative study with the Institute, Macquarie and Charles Sturt Universities and the New South Wales Office of Childcare on children experiencing multiple and changeable child care. Planning for a new project on children in diverse family structures is well advanced.

The *Family and Marriage Program* has continued to monitor family trends and changes. Ongoing work on the formation of positive family relationships included the development of a typology of pre-marriage education programs; this project was contracted by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, and undertaken in collaboration with the University of South Australia. A study of fertility decision making is being developed in collaboration with the Office of the Status of Women. In addition, a new core project on caring for children after separation will enter data collection stage in the year ahead.

In the *Family and Society Program*, the Families, Social Capital and Citizenship project

has proceeded from data collection to data analysis and initial dissemination of results. This work will continue into the next year.

In a year where there was renewed policy and public interest in the relationship between work and family, the Institute's work in this area was particularly relevant. The Family Friendly Work Practices project analysed differences in the availability and use of a range of family friendly work practices among employees working in the same workplace and between different workplaces. The second part of the project involved preparing a survey of the broad demographic, economic and social trends which have implications for policies and strategies that will be effective in assisting employees to negotiate work and family responsibilities.

The Family and Work Decisions project has used existing data sources to explore the determinants of mothers' employment, and will soon commence data collection on people's knowledge and understanding of the income support system and the way in which it interacts with paid employment, and decisions about labour force participation, living arrangements, and family formation.

The Impact of Children on Family Labour Supply project will develop and empirically estimate models of family labour supply which combine information on financial incentives with information on non-financial determinants of the decision to participate in the labour market. Particular attention is paid to the impact of career breaks on the subsequent labour market outcomes of mothers.

In addition, the *National Child Protection Clearinghouse* has been involved in a core research project exploring the access of vulnerable families to services. Data collection is currently under way and it is expected that the project will be completed by the end of 2002. Clearinghouse staff have

also collaborated with Griffith University and the University of Melbourne on an Australian Research Council grant evaluating the operation of children's contact services in Australia.

New contract research

- *Longitudinal Study of Australian Children:* In March 2002, the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator the Hon. Amanda Vanstone, announced that a consortium headed by the Institute had been selected to conduct the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) – a landmark study initiated and funded by the Department of Family and Community Services as part of the Commonwealth Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

The LSAC consortium, which includes nine leading Australian institutions, has expertise across the broad array of areas which the study will examine – children's experiences within their families, child care settings, schools and communities, and how these impact on all aspects of children's development. These areas of development include children's social, emotional, physical and cognitive functioning. The Institute, and the consortium, will be working in partnership with the Government to ensure the study is relevant to current policy concerns, and that the data are widely available to researchers.

This study will rely on the cooperation and involvement of thousands of families across Australia. Data will be collected over nine years from two cohorts every two years. The first cohort of 5,000 children aged less than 12 months in 2003 will be followed until they reach six to seven years of age, and the second cohort will

comprise 5,000 children aged four years in 2003. Study respondents will include the child (when of an appropriate age) and his/her parents, carers and teachers.

This will be a major project for the Institute and the consortium for coming years. The intended approach to the design and implementation of the study will ensure that LSAC is a world-leading, efficient and effective study that will make a major contribution to family policy in Australia.

- *Stronger Families Learning Exchange:* In December 2001, the Institute was contracted by the Department of Family and Community Services to establish and operate a Stronger Families Learning Exchange as part of the Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

The Learning Exchange has two components. Its Clearinghouse provides clients and stakeholders with the latest information on research and programs concerned with family wellbeing, primary prevention, and early intervention for families, and it facilitates information exchange using regular printed and electronic bulletins and an electronic discussion list. Its Training and Support Team uses action research methodology to provide practical advice, appropriate tools, and resources and training to Stronger Families Fund projects located in areas of high need across Australia, for the development, running, evaluation and modification of their community projects. Data gathered will be analysed and interpreted, and the lessons learned identified and further disseminated.

This project represents an important opportunity for the Institute. The Stronger Families Fund has very worthwhile objectives in itself, but the project

also ensures that the Institute has an Australia-wide presence and exposure, and helps to ground Institute research in the reality of what is happening to families and communities.

- *Fertility Decision Making Project:* This project is being undertaken in collaboration with the Office of the Status of Women, and will examine the nature of factors contributing to decisions about having children and their relative importance, and assess ways in which such factors interact to help shape fertility trajectories. The development of the project began in 2002. The project will be completed in 2004.
- *Measuring Social Capital in Families First Communities 4 Kids:* In May 2002, the Institute was contracted by the New South Wales Department of Community Services to undertake community-based research, to benchmark the nature and distribution of social capital in three specific communities. The project involves a series of community surveys and qualitative data collection. This community-based approach to measuring social capital provides an invaluable opportunity to link the ongoing work of the Families, Social Capital and Citizenship project with grounded service provision, and directly inform policy and service providers about the facilitation of social capital and community capacity.
- *The Australian Temperament Project:* A 12-month collaborative project between the Institute-housed Australian Temperament Project and Crime Prevention Victoria commenced in December 2001. The project aims to examine the nature and extent of adolescent antisocial and criminal behaviour, and to identify precursors of these types of behaviour.

- **National Child Protection Clearinghouse:** The Institute's National Child Protection Clearinghouse was contracted to provide a series of research briefs (literature reviews and analysis) on aspects of child protection and alternative care reform for the South Australian Department of Human Services. The contract was completed in September 2001.

In April 2002, the Clearinghouse was contracted by the Western Australian Government Inquiry into Responses by Government Agencies to Complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities, to provide a series of research briefs (literature reviews and analysis) on the subject of sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities. The contract was completed in May 2002.

Other activities

National Marriage and Family Council

The Director of the Institute is a member of the National Marriage and Family Council. This Council was established to advise the Minister for Family and Community Services on ways to improve marriage and family relationships. The Council met a number of times during the year, including at the Institute.

ACCI National Work and Family Awards

The Director has also been closely involved with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry National Work and Family Awards as a judge. These awards are sponsored by AMP and supported by the Council for Equal Opportunity in Employment Limited and the Work and Family Unit of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Senior appointment

Sarah Wise was promoted to the position of Principal Research Fellow (Children and Parenting) in October 2001. This vacancy had arisen due to the promotion of Associate Professor Ann Sanson to the position of Deputy Director, Research, at the Institute, in June 2001.

Information and dissemination

In addition to undertaking research on factors affecting family and marital stability in Australia, the Institute has an important role in coordinating and encouraging research and disseminating information about the Australian family.

There was no shortage of Institute research published in 2001–2002. In all, Institute staff authored or co-authored 21 major research articles in *Family Matters*; three Research Reports; three Research Papers; one Australian Family Briefing; four commissioned reports; the first Discussion Paper from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children; two National Child Protection Clearinghouse *Newsletters* and two *Child Abuse Prevention Issues Papers*; and the first Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin. Other outputs included in excess of 75 conference presentations, eight book chapters, and ten articles in refereed journals.

The Institute's web site (www.aifs.gov.au) is an increasingly important means by which the Institute reports on its programs and activities, disseminates information from its databases, publications and resource collections, and promotes the development of networks with other individuals and organisations concerned with family research and policy, both in Australia and overseas. The site now contains in excess of 2,600 pages of information.

There was a significant increase in use of the Institute's web site, with the addition of new sites dedicated to the Stronger Families and LSAC projects. Web usage has doubled in each of the last five years, with more than 1.7 million visits recorded for 2001-2002. The Melbourne *Herald Sun* reported that the Institute's web site was the fourth most visited family web site in Australia (*Herald Sun*, 25 July 2002, p. 12).

Corporate governance

The following is an outline of the Institute's corporate governance processes and practices.

Board of Management

Part XIVA of the *Family Law Act 1975*, as amended, provides for the appointment of a Board of Management consisting of the Director and four or more other members, appointed by the Governor General. The maximum term of appointment is seven years. Board members are eligible to be re-appointed.

The general direction of the Institute is entrusted to the Board of Management. Its role is to set broad guidelines for the operation of the Institute, and ensure that the Director has established appropriate plans, policies and procedures for the efficient and effective management of the Institute. The Board has operated collegially and consults regularly with staff of the Institute.

Board members have been advised of their corporate governance roles and responsibilities under the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies (CAC) Act 1997* and the *Family Law Act 1975*. The Internal Auditor has also reviewed the Institute's compliance with the CAC Act and has noted that there were no outstanding issues from earlier audits in this area.

Senior Executive

At 30 June 2002 the Institute's Senior Executive comprised David Stanton, Director, and Ann Sanson, Deputy Director (Research).

Subject to the Board's general direction, the Director is responsible for the management of the affairs of the Institute.

Subject to the general direction of the Board, and of the Director, the Deputy Director, Research, is responsible for the development and implementation of the Institute's research program.

Senior management committees

- *The Administration Finance and Audit Sub-Committee of the Board* contributes to the development of the Institute's financial management and audit systems, and monitors the progress of the Institute's Budget.
- *The Executive Management Group* meets monthly and comprises all Institute program managers. The role of the group is to facilitate both vertical and horizontal communication, and to ensure effective implementation of the Strategic Plan, the Research Plan and the Communications Plan.
- *The Ethics Committee* ensures that 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)*, are met in all research projects undertaken by the Institute. In particular, the Committee should ensure that projects meet the three key principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice as set down in the National Statement. All project proposals involving collection of primary data, whether for core or contract work, must

be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval. Ethics Committee members are listed in the next section of this report.

Corporate and operational plans

The planning framework adopted in 2001–2002 comprises a Strategic Plan, a Research Plan and a Communications Plan, all for the period 2002–2005. At 30 June 2002, work on the three plans was near to completion, awaiting final approval of the Board.

Under the framework, organisational, program and individual performance are to be regularly measured and reported against agreed outputs and outcomes targets.

As part of its Certified Agreement, all staff at the Institute participate in a Performance Assessment Scheme.

Internal audit arrangements

The Institute has recently completed a three-year internal audit process, the results of which, including the approach adopted to identifying areas of significant operational or financial risk, and arrangements in place to manage those risks, have been recorded in Annual Reports.

In 1999–2000 the Institute engaged Walter and Turnbull as its Internal Auditor to conduct a three-year internal audit program. The first year comprised an assessment of the Institute's compliance with the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act*, analysis of the Institute's internal financial controls, and a review of the Institute's preparedness for the GST.

The main focus during 2000–2001 was to review and upgrade the Institute's Fraud Control Plan, and review the Institute's Project Planning and Performance Reporting. A revised Fraud Control Policy and upgrades to the financial management systems were implemented.

A review of project planning and performance reporting conducted in 2000–2001 resulted in formal training for staff in project planning and reporting during 2001–2002, and the development of a formal procedure to review and evaluate projects once they are completed. This has involved extensive discussion across the Institute as the revised project management methodology has been progressively implemented.

Ethical standards

Institute staff are employed under the *Public Service Act 1999* and are therefore required to adhere to the professional standards contained in the Code of Conduct and APS Values.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies Certified Agreement 2000–2002 includes both Values and Code of Conduct. The Values and Code of Conduct are included in all contracts of employment.

The Values and Code of Conduct are also included on the Staff Intranet as a policy memorandum and have been actively drawn to the notice of all staff. The Director personally emphasises the Values and Code of Conduct in his induction discussion with new staff members. During the year, all staff were involved in training courses on the Public Service Act, including particular emphasis on values.

Apart from the legal requirements for privacy protection, the Institute expects the highest ethical standards of its staff in relation to privacy of the data that is collected and held by the Institute in relation to its research projects and consultancies.

Senior Executive remuneration

Remuneration for senior executive service officers is determined by the Director.

Business management

There were no issues arising from the 2001–2002 external audit. The Institute met its financial budget targets for the year, and the final net asset and cash-flow position place it in a sound position to carry out a vigorous research program during 2002–2003.

During the year the Institute implemented Phase 3 of a three-year Internal Audit Program. The main focus during 2001–2002 was to review and upgrade the Institute's corporate policies with particular attention to the fraud control plan, financial delegations

and responsibilities, and a major upgrade of the Finance and Accounting Manual. The Institute has also commenced a review of its risk management plan, with particular emphasis on contract and project risks.

Implementation of the 2000–2001 review of Project Planning is ongoing. In-house project management training, and the development of a project management framework for managers and staff to perform project tasks such as scoping and budgeting of projects, identifying and managing project risks and project reporting and review, are proceeding.

Outcomes	Departmental (price of outputs) Revenue from government (appropriations)			Revenue from other sources	Price of outputs	Total administered appropriations	Total appropriations	
	Bill No 1	Special approvs	Total					
Outcome 1 Inform governments, policy makers, and other stake- holders on factors influencing how families function	Actual	3,709	-	3,709	1,722	5,431	-	3,709
	Budget	3,709	-	3,709	1,451	5,160	-	3,709

	Actual 2001-2002	Budget 2001-2002
Administered appropriations	-	-
Total administered expenses	-	-
Departmental appropriations	3,709	3,709
Output group 1.1		
Total revenue from government	3,709	3,709
Contributing to the price of departmental outputs	3,709	3,709
Revenue from other sources		
Sales of goods and services	1,650	1,356
Interest and dividends	53	45
Other	19	50
Total revenue from other sources	1,722	1,451
Total price of departmental outputs	5,431	5,160
Total resourcing for outcome 1	5,431	5,160
Average staffing level number	39.52	38.00

The Honourable Ann Henderson *31 December 1941 – 4 June 2002*

The Director, Board Members, and Staff of the Australian Institute of Family Studies were deeply saddened by the news of the death of Ann Henderson, Presiding Member of the Institute's Board of Management, on 4 June 2002, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Appointed to the Board as Presiding Member in July 2000, she made a valuable contribution, bringing to the task a wealth of experience, practical ideas, and positive and forward-looking leadership.

Ann Henderson was Victorian Minister for Housing and Minister Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs from 1996 to 1999. She was the Member of the Legislative Assembly (Liberal Party) for the seat of Geelong from 1992 to 1999. During her term in Parliament she was Chair of the International Year of the Family Ministerial Council (1994), Chairman of the Aged Care Parliamentary Committee and a member of the Local Government, Community Services

and Tourism Parliamentary Committees (1992–1996). She was a board member of the National Ageing Research Institute (1994–1996), and a Member of Deakin University Council (1992–1996).

Her Parliamentary career was preceded by significant involvement in the Geelong community, including as Executive Officer of the Geelong Art Gallery Foundation and the Geelong branch of the National Trust of Australia, and as a welfare officer with Legacy and Do Care. She also served the community as Mayor of the City of Newtown.

Central to Ann Henderson's life was her family, and she was a proud and loving mother and devoted grandmother.

The State Funeral held for Ann at St Mary of the Angels Church in Geelong on 12 June 2002 was attended by Mr David Stanton, Director of the Institute.