



## INFORMATION, DISSEMINATION AND MARKETING PROGRAM

**T**he Information, Dissemination and Marketing Program aims to improve public understanding and inform the policy process about factors affecting marital and family wellbeing through:

- the timely documentation of Institute research findings in widely accessible and professionally produced publications;
- the extensive dissemination of research and other findings and the provision of efficient support for Institute-hosted conferences and seminars;
- the provision of a comprehensive national information resource on family-related matters;
- the development of appropriate information products and services for the use of researchers, government and the community;
- the provision of a network and resources to support the National Child Abuse Prevention Strategy; and
- the provision of resources to support the Stronger Families Learning Exchange.

## PUBLISHING

The Publishing unit documents Institute research findings and other family-related research in Australia and overseas in a variety of publications designed for the widest possible audience. Institute work informs: governments, for use in policy review; the academic community, for research and teaching purposes; the “helping” professions, for their work with and for families; and the wider community, to assist their understanding of family and societal change.

The most visible output from a research agency is its contribution to the literature. Throughout 2001–2002 the Institute continued to publish relevant and timely information in the area of family research.

The publishing program includes the Institute’s flagship publication *Family Matters*, and a range of titles published under the Institute imprint or in conjunction with other organisations and commercial publishing houses. In addition, research undertaken by Institute staff, or by external researchers using Institute data, is published in journals and conference proceedings, or appears in major Institute reports. Staff publications are listed by author name in Section 6 of this Annual Report.

To ensure the maximum reach and widest possible readership for Institute publications, most material published in print form is also published electronically on the Institute’s Web site. This occurs simultaneously in the case of free publications, or subsequent to initial publication in the case of the subscription-based *Family Matters* (see Information Development chapter in this section).

### Review processes

Again this year, works were published in accordance with the Institute’s established publishing review policy which requires

that drafts of all proposed new titles undergo rigorous internal and external review.

Drafts are reviewed in-house by the Director and the Deputy Director (Research), and by other researchers with particular expertise in the area relevant to the publication. In addition, each proposed new Institute title is reviewed by independent external reviewers, who are asked to refer to the Institute’s *Guide for External Review of Manuscripts* in preparing their evaluation reports. No draft may proceed to editing, production and publication without the approval of the Director.

Acceptance of all *Family Matters* material is subject to a formal review and assessment process, and material is reviewed by reference to the Institute’s *Criteria for Acceptance of Family Matters Articles*.

### Family Matters

The research journal *Family Matters* is the Institute’s main dissemination medium, its primary purpose being to keep its local and international readership informed about Institute research and activities. Thus the Institute places a high priority on its own research contribution to each edition. It is also the role of *Family Matters* to keep its readership informed more generally of relevant family-related research by publishing articles from other Australian and overseas sources.

Although designed to be accessible to a broad readership, *Family Matters* is a fully refereed academic journal, which is recognised by the Department of Education Science and Training for the purposes of Research Data Collection, and is included in the Register of Refereed Journals. The Institute holds copyright to all articles published.

The content of *Family Matters* reflects a mix of articles and a diverse range of perspectives and analyses of family research and policy options. In addition to research papers, regular informational columns include new developments in family law, a book notes section on new publications acquired by the Institute's library, a comprehensive listing of forthcoming conferences and seminars, and an opinion column. Readers' letters to the editor are welcomed and may be published in *Family Matters*.

General response – both written and spoken, formal and informal – to the enhanced design of *Family Matters* continues to be positive. This is reflected in the improved subscription trends (reported in the Marketing and Communications chapter in this section), and encourages the view that the journal will continue to be the main “voice” of the Institute. A subscription rate applies to *Family Matters*, but it is also distributed to an extensive free list (see Marketing chapter in this section).

*Family Matters* is published three times a year, in Winter, Spring/Summer and Autumn. In 2001–2002, in accordance with Institute policy, *Family Matters* continued to publish the work of external authors as well as reporting directly on Institute work.

- *Family Matters*, no. 59, Winter 2001 (92 pages) highlighted a diverse body of research on children in their family contexts. The underlying concern was how children and their families could best be supported, whatever their family

form and context, to provide for children's healthy development. Included were articles on: vulnerable children and their families; the school experiences of the children of gay and lesbian parents; the family's perspective of work and family; and parenting in the Torres Strait Islands. *The edition included seven major research articles authored or co-authored by Institute researchers.*

- *Family Matters*, no. 60, Spring/Summer 2001 (104 pages) was a special, extended “anniversary edition” featuring articles celebrating one hundred years of Federation, the 25th birthday of the Family Court of Australia, and the 21st birthday of the Australian Institute of Family Studies. Included were major articles on: changing families since 2001; families and socio-demographic trends over the century; changing patterns of social security and related policy issues; a history of children and parenting; and a history of child protection. There was a feature essay on the establishment of the Family Court, and an 18-page feature on the history and role of the Institute since its inception in 1980. *The edition included seven major research articles authored or co-authored by Institute researchers.*

- *Family Matters*, no. 61, Autumn 2002 (92 pages) drew on Institute and other Australian and overseas research to focus on the theme of work and family life. Included were articles on: access to family-friendly work arrangements; non-standard working hours and family life; how single mothers combine paid work and family responsibilities; and the implications of men's extended work hours. *The edition included seven major research articles authored or co-authored by Institute researchers.*

## New releases

In addition to the three editions of *Family Matters* and the *2000–2001 Annual Report*, the following publications were released during the year.

### Research Report series

Works in the Research Report series are substantial finished reports. With their individually illustrated covers, Research Reports comprise an up-market companion series to the unadorned A4-sized Research Paper series, and most (but not all) have a price attached.

Three Research Reports were produced during 2001–2002.

- *Australian Institute of Family Studies: Collected works 1980–2001*, compiled by Deborah Whithear, Research Report no. 6, December 2001 (108 pages). To mark its 21st anniversary, the Institute has brought together in one volume a complete list of all the publications it has been associated with since its inception in 1980. The 2,000 or so citations contained in the volume were generated by the Institute's bibliographic database, *Australian Family & Society Abstracts*. Taken together, they constitute an impressive contribution to the literature on families and a useful reference work and guide to the Institute's research output.
- *Family-Friendly Work Practices: Differences Within and Between Workplaces*, by Matthew Gray and Jacqueline Tudball, Research Report no. 7, March 2002 (52 pages). This report, which examines the extent to which access to family-friendly work practices is influenced or determined by differential access *within* or *between* organisations, was sponsored by Esso Australia and Mobil Oil Australia. The

analysis reveals that the variation in access to a range of work practices is greater among employees working in the same workplace than the variation between workplaces.

- *Children's Health and Development: New Research Directions for Australia*, edited by Ann Sanson, Research Report no. 8, produced in June and released in July 2002 (72 pages). The three papers in this report form an essential part of the background to the Institute's involvement in the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC). The first paper, "New ways of causal pathways thinking for public health", argues for why interdisciplinary research is now so crucial. The second paper, "The relevance of child and adolescent development for outcomes in educational, health and life success", makes the case for the importance of experiences and environments in the early years for outcomes across the life-span, and for the effectiveness of early intervention. The third paper, "Longitudinal studies of children and youth: implications for future studies", helps to frame the role of LSAC by summarising existing longitudinal research on children in Australia and overseas.

### Research Paper series

The Research Paper series (previously called Working Papers) is another means by which Institute research findings and methodologies are made public. The series enables the dissemination of Institute research (often during the course of a project) to policy makers, practitioners and researchers with the aim of encouraging dialogue with research and policy communities and thus obtaining review and feedback about the nature, direction and quality of Institute research.

Three new Research Papers were published in the financial year.

- *Determinants of Australian mothers' employment: An analysis of lone and couple mothers*, by Matthew Gray, Lixia Qu, David de Vaus and Christine Millward, Research Paper no.26, May 2002 (32 pages). This paper uses data from the 1996 Australian Census to analyse factors which explain the employment gap between lone mothers and couple mothers.
- *Social capital: Empirical meaning and measurement validity*, by Wendy Stone and Jody Hughes, Research Paper no. 27, May 2002 (72 pages). This paper draws on data collected in a national random survey of 1,500 households, to develop and test three competing approaches to measuring social capital, useful for application in different types of settings and for different research questions.
- *Why marriages last: A discussion of the literature*, by Robyn Parker, Research Paper no.28, produced in June and published in July 2002 (32 pages). Drawing on the literature, this paper discusses some of what is known about why many marriages last for very long periods and considers how knowledge of the ways in which marriages can be made to last can help young couples create and maintain their own enduring and rewarding marriages.

### **Briefing Paper series**

The Australian Family Briefing series is designed to present information about Institute research to the media and relevant key audiences in a form that is succinct, timely, policy relevant and media friendly.

One six-page, A4-size Briefing was released in the financial year.

- *Ageing yet diverse: The changing shape of Australia's population*, by Ruth Weston, Lixia Qu and Grace Soriano, Australian Family Briefing no. 10, September 2001 (6 pages). Australia is experiencing falling fertility in the context of increasing life expectancy – and thus an ageing population. This paper looks at population growth and its components, the changing demographic face of Australia, and the family-related experiences of those entering old age.

### **Longitudinal Study of Australian Children publications**

The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) is a landmark new study initiated by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services as part of the Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.

The first of the LSAC publications was released in June.

- *Introducing the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, by members of the LSAC Consortium, LSAC Discussion Paper no.1, June 2002 (64 pages). This first formal publication from LSAC presents an overview of the study, incorporating description of the rationale for the study, its relevance for policy development, the conceptual framework, broad and specific research questions, and study design. The bulk of the paper is taken up with a discussion of current thinking about how the research questions will be addressed, and what data are to be collected.

### **National Child Protection Clearinghouse publications**

Four publications emanated from the Institute-hosted National Child Protection Clearinghouse in 2001–2002.

Two attractive, reader-friendly *Newsletters* contained information on the latest activities, projects, research and resources in the area of child abuse prevention:

- National Child Protection Clearinghouse *Newsletter*, vol.9, no.2, Summer 2001, compiled by Katie Kovacs (32 pages).
- National Child Protection Clearinghouse *Newsletter*, vol.10, no.1, Winter 2002, compiled by Katie Kovacs (36 pages).

Two Clearinghouse *Issues Papers* addressed specific areas of enquiry:

- *Child abuse and the Internet*, by Janet Stanley, Issues Paper no. 15, Summer 2001, (20 pages).
- *The role of mass media in facilitating community education and child abuse prevention strategies*, by Bernadette J. Saunders, and Chris Goddard, Issues Paper no. 16, Winter 2002 (24 pages).

### **Stronger Families Learning Exchange publications**

As part of the Government's Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services has contracted the Institute to establish the Stronger Families Learning Exchange with the aim of supporting parents, families and communities in their role of caring for young children by contributing to the evidence base about the effectiveness of early interventions for families.

The first of the Learning Exchange publications, the *Bulletin*, was recently released.

- *Stronger Families Learning Exchange Bulletin*, no.1, Autumn 2002 (32 pages). This informative, lively, colourful and reader-friendly bulletin contains many interesting items on "action research", action research evaluation, early intervention

and prevention, and community capacity building. In what is the first of an ongoing series, seven of the Stronger Families Fund projects are profiled. There are literature highlights and forthcoming conferences sections.

### **Commissioned reports**

A number of studies were completed in the course of 2001–2002 resulting in the production of the following five reports.

- *A study of Australian relationship education service activities*, by Simons, M. and Parker, R., Report commissioned by Department of Family and Community Services.
- *Child Abuse and Family Violence in Aboriginal Communities – Exploring Child Sexual Abuse in Western Australia*, by Stanley, J., Kovacs, K., Cripps, K. and Tomison, A., Report for the Western Australian Government Inquiry into Responses by Government Agencies to complaints of Family Violence and Child Abuse in Aboriginal Communities (2002).
- *Patterns and Precursors of Adolescent Anti-social Behaviour*, by Vassallo, S., Smart, D., Sanson, A., Dussuyer, I. and the ATP team, First report from the collaborative partnership between the Australian Temperament Project at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, and Crime Prevention Victoria, Melbourne (2002).
- *Strategic Directions in Child Protection: Informing Policy and Practice*, by Tomison, A. and Stanley, J., Report by the National Child Protection Clearinghouse for the South Australian Department of Human Services (2001).
- *Using the UK Children in Need Assessment Framework in Australian Family Support Programs*, by Wise, S., Report to the Financial Markets Foundation for Children (2001).

## Other publishing activities

This year the Institute's Publishing Unit, in conjunction with contracted graphic design houses, has been closely involved in the process of creating logos and visual "identities" for three Institute projects.

***Stronger Families Learning Exchange*** – the logo selected for this project was developed from artwork originally commissioned by the Institute for the cover of its Winter 1999 edition of *Family Matters* which focused on the Government's (then) new stronger families strategy, thus visually reflecting the Institute's continuing connection to the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The logo made its first appearance on the inaugural issue of the *Stronger Families Bulletin* last Autumn.

***Australian Temperament Project*** – the 2002 ATP survey provided a valuable opportunity to update the visual identity of this long-running study. A fresh new image and modern colours were thus introduced for ATP stationery and for use on the study questionnaires distributed in June.

***Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*** – design briefs outlining requirements for tagline and the look, livery and logo of this major new study were prepared and sent to three design houses who were invited to tender. Some of these are presently under consideration for further development.

## MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Marketing and Communications unit promotes the Australian Institute of Family Studies to the community through the marketing and distribution of Institute research products, media liaison and public information dissemination, and through the administration and promotion of Institute conferences and seminars.

### Institute conference

Planning for the Eighth Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, *Steps forward for families: Research, practice and policy*, was well in hand at the end of the financial year. The conference will be held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre on Southbank on 12–14 February 2003.

### Media liaison

The print and electronic media are an important means by which the Institute communicates its research findings to the community. Contact with the media is undertaken in accordance with the Institute's media policy, and generally takes three forms: provision of information or comment about Institute research; comment about current research on families not undertaken by the Institute, including overseas research; and referral to other researchers or relevant agencies outside the Institute. The main Institute points of contact with the media are the Acting Manager, Strategy and Communication, the Institute's Family Information Centre, and Institute researchers.

In a year where there was sustained media interest in issues such as fertility, child care, and work and family life, *Family Matters* articles, Research Reports and Research Papers that touched on these themes were widely reported.

Journalists made more than 600 requests for information or comment from the Institute. There were 225 reports or articles which included mention of the Institute's research or expertise recorded for the year.

The media coverage of the Institute's research led to a steady flow of enquiries from the public and professionals working with children and families about the various studies, and forms the Institute's principal means of reaching the general public. The reports received from Media Monitors are detailed below.

**Table 4.1** References to Institute research in the media 2001-2002

Reports by program area and topic		
<i>Children and Parenting</i>		
Child care	15	
Australian Temperament Project	6	
Work and family	10	
Other	7	38
<i>Family and Marriage</i>		
Divorce	8	
Fertility	39	
Work and family	15	
Census	15	
Marriage and cohabitation	39	
Other	29	145
<i>Family and Society</i>		
Cost of children/Foregone earnings	9	
Lone mothers	4	
Work and family	15	
Other	4	32
<i>Longitudinal Study of Australian Children</i>		7
<i>National Child Protection Clearinghouse</i>		3
		<b>225</b>
Source: Media Monitors		

The standout issue of 2001–2002 was work and family. With research into this area occurring across the research program, the Institute was well positioned to contribute information and comment on many aspects of this extremely complex issue. Research Papers, Research Reports and *Family Matters* articles that focused on work and family were all extensively reported on their release, as were reports from previous years. The Institute’s data on foregone earnings from child rearing, and data on the costs of children, were also frequently cited as the focus of public debate shifted to maternity leave and fertility. Institute researchers became regular contributors to print, radio and television reports on the impact of work on family life, and the longer-term impact of declining fertility rates.

### Marketing, sales and distribution

The year 2001–2002 saw the publication of three Research Reports; three Research Papers; one Australian Family Briefing; and the first publication from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC Discussion Paper no. 1). These free publications were distributed at conferences, to select mailing lists, and via the Institute’s Family Information Centre. They are also available on the Institute’s internet site. Revenue from books published in previous years was \$14,603.

<b>Media type</b>	
Newspaper	83
Magazine	7
Radio	60
Television	75
	<b>225</b>
<b>Media location</b>	
National	22
Adelaide	16
Brisbane	14
Canberra	16
Darwin	8
Hobart	6
Melbourne	44
Sydney	36
Perth	10
Regional	53
	<b>225</b>

*Source:* Media Monitors

*Family Matters* subscriptions raised \$63,519. Almost 4,000 copies of each edition were distributed, with 2,000 of these being sold to subscribers. The remainder were distributed to members of Parliament, media, research and policy organisations with whom the Institute has exchange agreements, and by legal deposit into state and university libraries.

## FAMILY INFORMATION CENTRE

The objectives of the Institute's Library, known as the Family Information Centre, are to support the work of the Institute and to provide a national information resource on the family by collecting family-related information and making it available as widely and cost-efficiently as possible.

The Family Information Centre contributes to the Institute's research by anticipating research needs, proactively identifying knowledge and resources that will inform the Institute's work, and supplying staff with needed information, materials, resources and services.

With its collection and services, the Family Information Centre plays an important role in the Institute's dissemination of family-related information. With so much now being published in electronic format, the Centre increasingly provides access to electronic resources or Web addresses, rather than to hard copy materials.

It also plays a strategic role for the Institute by hosting communication projects, such as the National Child Protection Clearinghouse and the Stronger Families Learning Exchange, both provided under contract for the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services.

Clients are the Institute's staff, and stakeholders of the communications projects managed by the library. An important resource for the wider community, the Family Information Centre is used by government officers, service providers, researchers, trainers, teachers and students, and the media.

### Collection and resources

The library collects on, or provides access to, topics such as the sociology of the family, child development and psychology, family

dynamics and relationships, family law, social justice, social problems and child abuse and protection, public and mental health, family economics and research methodology. International materials are collected selectively, and Australian materials intensively.

The catalogue, which is searchable on the Internet, is enhanced with tables of contents and abstracts to improve bibliographic accessibility. Catalogue holdings are added to the National Bibliographic Database so that the collection may be accessible to over a thousand other networked Australian libraries and their patrons. The National Bibliographic Database is the fundamental tool underpinning resource sharing among Australian libraries. Participation in the National Bibliographic Database, the largest database of its kind in Australia, provides a mechanism for efficient cataloguing and document supply.

### Services

Clients are provided with a number of services – current awareness, reference/help desk and document delivery.

#### *Current awareness*

Various electronic current awareness services provide Institute researchers with information on the latest publications in their respective research areas and inform them of recent developments in relevant legislation and policy.

National Child Protection Clearinghouse and Stronger Families Learning Exchange clients are alerted to new acquisitions in their fields of interest by *Literature highlights* sections of Bulletins and Newsletters.

### **Reference/information service**

While librarians provide comprehensive reference services to Institute staff if required, following a user survey the library is moving to a system whereby researchers are enabled to perform their own searches of statistical and bibliographic electronic databases. This trend will continue in the coming year with the purchase of further electronic database licences.

An information service is available to the general public during normal business hours with informational requests received by phone, email, letter, or in person. An appointment system for visitors regulates service usage and increases efficiency in service provision. However, probably due to the large amount of information made available on the Institute's Web site, decreasing use is being made of this service.

### **Document supply/delivery**

Document supply/delivery transactions for 2001–2002 totalled nearly 4,000 – a 25 per cent increase on the number for the previous year. A mix of commercial document delivery services and interlibrary arrangements was used for the provision of materials to Institute staff.

## **Challenges faced during 2001–2002**

During the last year, the Family Information Centre began a major upgrade of its library management software. Now substantially completed, the upgrade offers enhanced features for Institute staff and external

clients. In particular, it provides an improved Web-enabled user-friendly catalogue for users to identify research materials available in the library's collection or online. Highly configurable, the catalogue can be tailored to the needs of various clients with unique requirements, and different versions can be provided for different clients. The new software will also improve efficiency of cataloguing, circulation and serials management.

Software has been developed in-house this year to manage the large number of requests processed for journal articles. Nearly 2,400 requests have been handled by the new in-house software.

During this last year, the library collection outgrew the available space, and strategies were explored to provide room for the next five to ten years' growth. It was required that storage would enable easy access to the collection for staff and users, and satisfy occupational health and safety requirements for library staff. Storage had to be capable of being disassembled, moved and re-assembled, and, as the library is in a prominent location in the building, had to be in keeping with the "public face" of the Institute. Most importantly, the storage must represent value for money for the Institute. After careful consideration, it was decided that these requirements would be satisfied by the library moving to a compactus storage system. The equipment has been ordered and planning is under way to ensure least disruption for library clients during the installation period.

## INFORMATION DEVELOPMENT

The role of the Information Development Unit is to develop methods to facilitate information dissemination of Institute research and other Australian family research and information so that access is available to Institute staff and externally to researchers, government and the community. In line with Commonwealth government policy, online dissemination via the World Wide Web is an increasingly important means of dissemination.

Activities designed to achieve this objective during the 2001–2002 year are: the continued production of the Institute's bibliographic database *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* and its supply to a number of external hosts for a range of products to reach a maximum audience; ongoing compilation of *Family Thesaurus*; the development and maintenance of databases for special projects; the continuing development and maintenance of the Institute's World Wide Web site and the National Child Protection Clearinghouse Web site; and the development of Web sites for the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children and the Stronger Families Learning Exchange.

### Australian Family & Society Abstracts

The *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* (AF&SA) database project began in 1983 with the aim of providing Australia-wide and international access to information and research on Australian family issues. The database records citations and abstracts to the research, policy and practice literature about Australian families and the social issues that impact on them.

During 2001–2002 more than 3,600 new items were added to AF&SA bringing the total number of indexed documents to 49,300. Of the documents indexed this year thirty three per cent link directly to the

full text report or article on the Web, thus providing a time-saving facility highly valued by clients.

*Australian Family & Society Abstracts* is now an established information service in the social sciences and one of a number of national bibliographic databases which together provide access to Australia's research literature. Public access to AF&SA is available on:

- Informit Online – a Web-based online service of Australian research databases hosted by RMIT Publishing;
- AUSTROM – the Australian social sciences CD-ROM;
- AustHealth – Australian health issues CD-ROM;
- ATSI Rom – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CD-ROM;
- Family & Society Studies Worldwide CD-ROM; and
- Family & Society Studies Worldwide on Biblioline on the Web (the last two items are US products produced by the National Information Services Corporation).

*Australian Family & Society Abstracts* is in demand in the tertiary education and government sectors, and well used by non-government organisations and professionals. The database is the source of a number of information resources on the AIFS Web site,

for example specialist subject bibliographies and the weekly current awareness list of new journal articles. And, with its aim to record all Australian family research since 1980, AF&SA made possible the recent Institute publication *Collected works: 1980–2001: Australian Institute of Family Studies*, a volume of more than 2,000 citations providing a comprehensive list of work undertaken at the Institute during the past twenty-one years.

### Internet project

The Institute's Web site aims to report on Institute programs and activities, disseminate information from its databases, publications and resource collections, and promote the development of networks with other individuals and organisations concerned with family research and policy.

The Web site and subsidiary sites (National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Youth Suicide Prevention project, Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, and Stronger Families Learning Exchange Web sites) have shown strong growth during the year, now offering more than 2,600 pages. To streamline the development of new pages a focus for this year has been on implementing Cascading Style Sheets and templates on all new pages and pages that require updating.

The requirements of the Commonwealth Government's Online Strategy have been fulfilled, a fourth and final Online Survey report completed, our Online Action Plan updated, and an amount of retrospective and continuous work performed to meet online service obligations, guidelines and standards. Attention has been paid to

accessibility issues as required by the Commonwealth Disability Strategy, and the standards set by the World Wide Web Consortium's *Web Content Accessibility Guidelines*, Priority Level 1, is the aim for all Institute publications on the Web.

An "Email and Web Use" policy was developed and approved in August 2001. This provides Institute staff with guidelines for acceptable use of email and the Web and is available on the Staff Intranet.

Since its launch in March 1996, visits to the Institute's Web site and subsidiary sites have almost doubled each year. In 2001–2002, accesses by Australian visitors were predominantly from the government sector (219,910), followed by media/networks (169,179), business (127,920), and education (77,134). All sectors showed an increase on 2000–2001 figures, with government (federal, state, local) recording five times the number of accesses than in the previous year.

### Main sections of the Institute's Web site include:

- About the Australian Institute of Family Studies – the Institute, the Board, the staff;
- What's new – at the Institute and on the Web site;
- Staff vacancies;
- Media releases;
- Publications;
- Research program – descriptions and progress of projects;
- Information resources – a free weekly current awareness service of journal abstracts selected from the *Australian*

1997-1998	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002
172,049	318,925	582,657	951,572	1,769,933

*Family & Society Abstracts* database, an online version of *Family Thesaurus*, bibliographies, links to conference papers, articles and reports on the Web;

- Databases online – the Institute’s library catalogue, National Child Protection Clearinghouse projects database, and information about *Australian Family & Society Abstracts*;
- Email discussion lists – childprotect, MARE – Marriage and Relationship Education, Isac-refgroup, and closed lists for the SFLEX and LSAC projects;
- Institute seminars – dates and details about the Institute’s monthly seminar program;
- Forthcoming conferences – Australian and international conferences that focus on family research, policy and related areas;
- Courses and training programs – for parents, students and professionals on family-related topics offered in Australia;
- Links – an extensive collection of links to other organisations and resources in Australia and overseas (relevant government agencies, research and policy centres, trends and statistics, online articles and reports, e-journals etc);
- Site map – to assist navigation, accessible from all main pages; and
- Legal Notice – containing Copyright, Privacy, and Disclaimer statements, accessible from the home page and other key pages.

New features/pages added during this financial year included: first, a Search engine for author, title, and keyword access to all Web resources; second, access to an online version of *Family Thesaurus*, the source of subject terms in *Australian Family & Society Abstracts*, and also used as a reference for

terminology in Australian family studies; and three, a special links page to online articles and reports about Ageing and aged care, Marriage and relationship education, Social capital and community development, and Work and family.

### ***Promoting the Institute and its work via the Web***

**aifs-alert** is an email list for Institute announcements. Subscribers receive notification approximately once a week about new publications and information services, media releases, additions and updates to the Web site, the new journal abstracts listing, and forthcoming seminars and conferences. More than 500 people from government agencies, non-government organisations, universities, business, and the media, predominantly from Australia, have subscribed to date.

### ***National Child Protection Clearinghouse Web site***

Use of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse Web site has increased 28 per cent on last year (pages downloaded increased from 237,773 to 328,000). Continued demand has been recorded for Clearinghouse Issues and Discussion Papers online, topical bibliographies, the Directory of child abuse prevention organisations, and links pages. The “What’s new” page continued to alert visitors to State and Territory news, new publications, training seminars and conferences, and to promote key child abuse prevention events and issues from around the world. The *childprotect* email discussion list moderated by the Clearinghouse’s research staff has been very active during the year with discussion covering a broad range of issues.

New pages on the Clearinghouse Web site include: Issues paper no.15, *Child abuse and the Internet*; “Internet Safety”, a page

providing links to a number of sites which discuss safety issues and offer guidelines for parents of children and young people using the Internet; and, "Guidelines for Police Clearances and Checks" for those people working with children and adolescents.

### ***Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Web site***

The Web site for this large national study, set up to explore family and social issues and address a range of research questions about children's development and wellbeing, was launched in April 2002. Information about the sample and data collection, the personnel responsible for the study, publications, links to related longitudinal studies worldwide, and how to join a Reference group to be informed of ongoing progress of the study are now available. The site will be used to inform and communicate with all interested parties.

### ***Stronger Families Learning Exchange Web site***

The Stronger Families Learning Exchange (SFLEX) project, funded under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, aims to contribute to the formation of an evidence base from which to inform policy, practice and research in strengthening families and communities. An integral part of the Learning Exchange is the SFLEX Web site, launched in May 2002. The Web site aims to provide clients and stakeholders with a variety of services including access to resources on community development, early intervention and prevention and action research and information exchange via regular printed and electronic bulletins. In addition, a password protected part of the site has been established to support the information and action research needs of Stronger Family Fund projects and associated stakeholders.

## NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION CLEARINGHOUSE

The mission of the National Child Protection Clearinghouse is to help families and communities create an environment conducive to the wellbeing, care and protection of children.

The National Child Protection Clearinghouse is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services as part of the Commonwealth's response to the problem of child abuse. The Clearinghouse has operated from the Australian Institute of Family Studies since 1995. It aims to inform policy, practice and research into child abuse prevention and provides the following functions:

### Knowledge base

The Clearinghouse forms a knowledge base from which to inform policy, practice and research in child abuse prevention by collecting resources and providing access to information. Research and practice literature, other informational resources and specialised databases are brought together into an electronic and hard-copy repository of information on child abuse prevention, which comprises over 5,000 items. Resources are made widely accessible via a Web-based catalogue.

Materials are made available to clients by the interlibrary system or directly through membership for small, non-government, community-based organisations. Eighty-one such organisations use the collection via the membership scheme.

Bibliographic information about the prevention of child abuse and neglect is incorporated into the Australian Institute of Family Studies' computerised database,

*Australian Family & Society Abstracts*. Four and a half thousand items are represented on the database.

As well, the Clearinghouse maintains and develops a specialised database to document child abuse prevention projects and activities. Information is collected on prevention programs to serve as models from which other program providers may benefit, and to provide a picture of child prevention activity throughout Australia. This information is incorporated into an electronic database with 1,300 items and mounted on the Internet site.

### Communications

The knowledge base is used to generate a number of communications activities. Information resources of the Clearinghouse are disseminated to a network of 8,000 clients through regular paper and electronic publications. Interested people may join the mailing list to receive two Issues Papers and two Newsletters per year, or may access electronic copies on the Web site. Issues Papers focus on a topic of particular relevance to the field, while Newsletters include feature articles plus information on the latest publications and resources, developments in policy or legislation, and forthcoming conferences and workshops.

Up-to-date information on child abuse prevention is provided and maintained on the Internet site. In addition to descriptions of

the mission statement and functions of the Clearinghouse, the site currently includes the full text of all Clearinghouse publications; dates for forthcoming conferences; a list of Australian and international organisations concerned with child abuse prevention (with links to their Internet sites); regularly updated bibliographies on specific aspects of the prevention of child abuse and neglect; and access to the Child Abuse Prevention Programs Database.

The Web site is well used, with about 253,000 requests for electronic pages during the last year.

### Advisory services

Clearinghouse staff draw on the knowledge base to provide advisory services. A library help desk service is provided for clients who do not have access to a computer or related electronic communications infrastructure. The Clearinghouse's research staff are available to help with more specialised questions. The take-up of this service increases significantly each year, and a total of 1,792 requests were responded to during 2001–2002.

### Networking/outreach

Networking is facilitated by the provision of the *Child Abuse Prevention Programs* database which includes contact details for participants.

Professionals working in the field may join the email discussion list, *childprotect*, to discuss research, practice and policy issues

relating to child abuse prevention and protection. The list's intended participants include service providers, government officers and researchers. Currently there are 419 subscribed members of *childprotect* e-list.

In order to have some control over the issues being discussed and the quality of the electronic interchanges, *childprotect* is run as a closed, monitored and moderated list.

The Clearinghouse provides education and training seminars in rural/remote areas throughout Australia. As well, Clearinghouse staff participate in relevant workshops, conferences and related activities, presenting papers and seminars and providing an information stall.

### Research initiatives

The Clearinghouse undertakes research projects on child protection and child abuse prevention. In 2001–2002, the Clearinghouse has been involved in a number of projects where the purpose has been to identify the ways in which child abuse prevention and child protection is being undertaken in various parts of Australia, to inform child protection reform process, and to develop a child abuse prevention research agenda. A detailed report of the research initiatives is contained in the Research Program section.

## STRONGER FAMILIES LEARNING EXCHANGE

The Stronger Families Learning Exchange aims to contribute to the evidence base about the effectiveness of early interventions for families and to support the work of Stronger Families Fund projects.

In December 2001, the Institute was contracted by the Department of Family and Community Services to provide a Stronger Families Learning Exchange as part of the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The Strategy is a national program which encourages coordination and integration of local services to help communities find new ways to strengthen family functioning, with a focus on early childhood development and effective parenting.

The Learning Exchange will provide information, resource sharing, training and advice on family wellbeing, primary prevention and early intervention. Its primary stakeholders are Stronger Families Fund personnel and government officers working with these personnel, but its services extend to the wider community concerned with family wellbeing.

The first six months of the project have been devoted to setting up a number of resources and services, and to promoting these resources and services to Australian community organisations and to other potential stakeholders.

### Library collection and services

A collection of Australian and international early intervention and prevention research and practice literature and resources has been established, and will be developed further over the life of the project. Currently the

Exchange holds over 3,000 records in its catalogue database directly related to this area (i.e. on topics such as stronger families, family strengths, action research, community development/capacity building, resilience, parenting/parent education, early intervention, primary prevention, and early childhood. Another 4,000 records on these topics are indexed in the Institute's *Australian Family & Society Abstracts* database.

Pin numbers have been provided to primary stakeholders to enable special Web-based access to the Institute's databases and library services, and a help desk service responds to queries or provides customised printouts on request.

### Internet site

The new Stronger Families Learning Exchange Web site contains two sections – a public access section and a password-protected extranet. The public access Web site contains, in addition to descriptions of the objectives and functions of the Learning Exchange:

- electronic resources and links to significant organisations;
- dates for forthcoming conferences;
- the electronic version of the first Bulletin;
- a “good practice” in early intervention database.

This part of the Web site received over 6,000 requests for electronic pages in its first three months of availability.

The password-protected part of the Web site – the extranet – contains the following features:

- data from Stronger Families Fund projects;
- the closed e-discussion list (*sff-discuss*) for primary stakeholders to discuss research, policy and practice issues;
- templates and training/informational resources.

### SFLEX publications

The Learning Exchange publishes six-monthly bulletins, in hard copy and electronic format, containing information about the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy, Stronger Families Fund project descriptions and news, best practice and research.

The first bulletin has been produced and distributed to a mailing list and to individuals or organisations requesting copies. Demand for the publication has been considerable, and to date more than 11,000 copies have been distributed throughout Australia. An electronic copy of the Bulletin has also been posted on the Web site.

### Training and support team activities

A major component of the Learning Exchange is the provision of action research evaluation support to 60–70 Stronger Families Fund projects, funded under the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. The Institute has developed a Training and Support Team of researchers to support the funded projects. The Team will assist projects to design and carry out an action research evaluation of their project, providing advice and support on issues such as: action research processes; research design and methods; the analysis and interpretation of data; and the production of project reports. A detailed report on the activities of the Team is contained in the Research Program section.