

Director's Report

DAVID STANTON



The Minister for Family and Community Services announced on 26 November 1999 that I had been appointed to the position of Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies. I am very pleased to have had the opportunity of working with the staff and the Board of the Institute since May this year, and I look forward to building on the Institute's reputation for quality research in the coming years.

Families, welfare and social policy

This edition of *Family Matters* focuses on the theme of 'Families, welfare and social policy'. It is a very timely edition, coming at the commencement of a period of major review of the social welfare system in Australia.

In a speech at the National Press Club on 29 September 1999, Senator Jocelyn Newman, Minister for Family and Community Services, announced that social policy would be a major reform priority of the Howard Government. Senator Newman announced the formation of a Reference Group on Welfare Reform to guide the development of a comprehensive Green Paper on welfare reform. Welfare dependency is a key issue for investigation by the Reference Group. (See Senator Newman's article elsewhere in this edition.)

In putting this issue of *Family Matters* together, the Institute's Research Manager, Professor Peter Saunders, has drawn upon both Australian and international sources for perspectives on current and future directions in welfare policy. With contributions from the United States and the United Kingdom, both of which have adopted reform measures to address the issue of long-term dependency on welfare, the Australian reform agenda is placed in an international context. We hope that this will add a valuable dimension to the social policy debate currently underway in Australia.

The Institute's interest in the issue of welfare reform has been a long one – indeed, the Institute held a Workshop as long ago as 1983 on the subject of 'Single parents: work or welfare?' Since its inception 1980 the Institute has built up and shared a wealth of experience and knowledge on issues affecting the wellbeing and stability of families. Research areas have included: the social costs of child and family poverty and marriage breakdown; the living standards of low and middle income families; labour force issues; housing; family income transfers, child support and tax; educational and other disadvantage suffered by children in poor families; and child abuse and neglect. Over the years all of this research has informed the development of family policy in Australia.

There is clearly a continuing role for the Institute's current research program to contribute to family policy, especially in understanding the extent of the inter-relationship of factors contributing to and arising from welfare dependency. The Institute will be looking to make a constructive contribution to this ongoing debate.

Costs of children

Also in this issue (pages 82-87) is a special report on the costs of children by Ann Harding and Richard Percival from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM). For many years, *Family Matters* has provided updated estimates of the cost of raising children. In the last issue, we carried two papers which calculated new sets of estimates based on two different methodological approaches. We are pleased now to be able to follow these up with this third approach developed by NATSEM. As Ann Harding and Richard Percival note, there is no 'one right answer' here, but a range of alternative methodologies that can be used.

NEW AIFS DIRECTOR APPOINTED

The Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Jocelyn Newman, today announced the appointment of Mr David Stanton as Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Mr Stanton has been the Acting Director of the Institute since 31 May 1999.

Senator Newman said that Mr Stanton's in-depth understanding of the key issues facing the Institute's future work program and his knowledge of the research needs of the Government and the community would be a great asset.

'Ongoing development of a National Families Strategy is a major commitment of the Howard Government and the Institute plays a key role into research on families,' Senator Newman said.

Mr Stanton has had a distinguished career in the Australian Public Service where he has held a number of senior management and research positions in the area of social policy.

Mr Stanton also brings considerable international experience to the position after holding a number of key overseas posts, including: Social Policy Consultant in Trinidad and Tobago, and the People's Republic of China; Consultant Pension Economist to the Asian Development Bank on pension reform issues in the Asia and Oceania Region; and Consultant Social Security Planner to the International Labour Office on the reform of the Egyptian social protection system.

'Under Mr Stanton's astute leadership, I look forward to the continuation of the Institute's vital role in conducting research into identifying and understanding the factors affecting family and marital stability in Australia,' Senator Newman said. 'Importantly, the Institute's work will continue to help the Government in the development of policy to address the needs of Australian families.'

PRESS RELEASE: Senator Jocelyn Newman, Minister for Family and Community Services, 26 November 1999.

Family futures: issues in research and policy

Senior appointments

I am pleased to be able to confirm that the Institute has now completed its appointment of senior research staff.

Associate Professor Ann Sanson has been appointed Principal Research Fellow in the Children and Parenting Program, and will take up her appointment in the New Year. Dr Sanson is Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Melbourne. She has an international reputation for her academic, research and publication achievements in the children and parenting field. The principal focus of her work has been the behavioural, academic and emotional development of children and adolescents and she has written on issues ranging from juvenile justice, children and the Family Court; media violence; gambling; child care and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity disorder. Her specialist skills and knowledge will provide leadership to the Institute's research in this important area of our activities.

In the last edition of *Family Matters* I reported the appointments of Dr Belinda Felhberg who is heading the Family and Marriage Program, and Dr Ian Winter who is heading the Family and Society Program. The three key senior research posts are now fully staffed and we look forward to the commencement of a number of new projects in the coming months and a very productive year 2000.

Institute conference

This edition of *Family Matters* contains a call for papers for the Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference 2000 – *Family Futures: Issues in Research and Policy*. The conference has been organised around the sub-themes of raising children, building relationships, and enriching civil society, which have been drawn from the Institute's three key research areas.

Readers should note that this year's conference will be held in July – a departure from our usual November timeslot. Pre-conference literature, including registration brochures, will be available early in the year, and at the Institute's Web site www.aifs.org.au.

Family Matters

Readers of *Family Matters* will have noticed some quite significant changes to the magazine in 1999. We trust you are happy with the results and we welcome your feedback and comments. This is the last edition of *Family Matters* for 1999 and subscription renewals will be mailed shortly. We look forward to your continued interest in the Institute's work, and wish you and your family a safe and happy festive season.



David I. Stanton

The Australian Institute of Family Studies invites submissions from people interested in presenting papers, symposia or workshops at the Seventh Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, to be held at the Sydney Convention Centre from Monday 24 July to Wednesday 26 July 2000.

The conference will provide a valuable forum for those interested or involved in family research, family policy, or providing services to families in Australia. It will focus on family issues in Australia and feature the presentation and discussion of findings of the Institute's own studies, along with work from a wide range of researchers, government bodies, service providers and community organisations.

Keynote speakers

The 2000 conference will feature three world class keynote speakers.

Lawrence Mead is Professor of Politics at New York University where he teaches public policy and American politics. He is an internationally known writer on social policy issues, especially welfare and welfare reform, on work requirements in welfare, and on the implementation of welfare employment programs. His books include *Beyond Entitlement* (1986), *The New Politics of Poverty* (1992), and *The New Paternalism: Supervisory Approaches to Poverty* (1997).

Norval Glenn is Professor of American Studies and Sociology at the University of Texas, Austin, and director of research at the Council on Families, under the auspices of the Institute for American Values. Much of his research in the past decade has focused on marriage, divorce, and remarriage in the United States. He is an editor of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family* and author of *Family Relations: A Reader* (1988).

Carol Smart has been Professor of Sociology at the University of Leeds, UK, since 1992 and is founding Director of the University's Centre for Research on Family, Kinship and Childhood. She is Deputy Director of the ESRC research group on Care, Values and the Future of Welfare (CAVA) at Leeds. Her recent publications include *Family Fragments* (1999), *The 'New' Family* (1999), and *Objects of Concern: Children and Divorce* (1998).

Program content

Submissions are invited on any aspect of family research and policy, including family trends, family life and relationships, children, economics, support programs and family law. The Institute welcome papers exploring: research methodologies and problems (especially longitudinal work); theory relating to family, gender and sexuality; comparative research; policy and program evaluation; and historical scholarship.

Presenters are asked to note the following topic areas, and to consider the three conference sub-themes: Children and Parenting; Family and Marriage; and Families and Society. There will also be an open stream for papers which do not fit the sub-themes.

Children and parenting

- Parenting
- Fathers' role in families: barriers and opportunities
- The co-parental relationship, parenting styles and children's wellbeing
- Schools, peers, neighbourhoods: implications for parents and children
- Supporting parenting and parent-child relationships
- Cultural diversity, parenting and children's wellbeing
- Adjusting to family transitions: step-parenting
- Non-resident parents and their children
- Child abuse and protection
- Extended families and intergenerational relationships
- Child care
- Family violence
- Youth suicide

Family and marriage

- Effects of divorce on children and young people
- Family economics and the post-divorce family
- Co-parenting after divorce
- Relationship education and intervention
- Strategies for supporting marriage and family life
- Processes in the development of strong relationships
- Sibling relationships and adjustment to parental divorce
- Current directions in family law
- Exploring differences between married and de facto relationships
- Same sex relationships
- Men, women and the institution of marriage

Family and society

- Social capital and civil society
- Business and community partnerships
- Labour market inequality
- Housing opportunities and constraints
- Mutual obligation and the welfare state: support for families in the 21st century
- Family values
- Work and family
- Older people
- Policy implications of an ageing population
- Social and demographic trends affecting families
- Family, community, crime and safety

Further information

The closing date for applications is 31 March 2000.

Submissions are invited for individual papers, symposia, and workshops from those involved in family research, family policy, or providing services to families in Australia.

To obtain the Call for Papers application form and guidelines for submissions, contact the Australian Institute of Family Studies, 300 Queen Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000 Australia. Phone: (03) 9214 7888. Fax: (03) 9214 7839. Or make a submission via the Institute's Web site: www.aifs.org.au/

NEW DIRECTOR FOR AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF FAMILY STUDIES

As reported on page two of this issue of Family Matters, the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Jocelyn Newman, has announced the appointment of Mr David Stanton as Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

Mr David Stanton has been acting as the Director of Programs of the Department of Social Security. This Australian Institute of Family Studies since May 1999. He included responsibility for policy development and analysis, program management and implementation, and research and evaluation in relation to all family programs (expenditure on which was more than \$13,000 million). He acted as Deputy Secretary responsible for policy and programs.

He has had a distinguished career in the Australian Public Service over some 32 years. His career in the Public Service commenced with the Australian Bureau of Statistics before moving to the Department of Social Security. For some years he was Assistant Secretary in charge of the Research and Statistics Branch in the Development Division of the Department of Social Security, where he was responsible for managing the Department's research program. He developed the Department's series of research and discussion papers, and its research journal.

He was appointed to the position of First Assistant Secretary of the Development Division of the Department of Social Security in 1987. He was subsequently Director of the Social Security Review. He was subsequently Director of the New South Wales Office of the Department, where he was responsible for some 5,500 staff, seven Area Offices and 78 Social Security Regional Offices, for three years.

He then held various positions as First Assistant Secretary in the Department of Social Security in Canberra, including responsibility for the Performance and Control Division and then the Evaluation and Services Division.

For some five years, from 1992 to 1997, David was responsible for the national management of the Family

AIFS PANEL SURVEY UPDATE

As the Institute's Research Manager, Peter Saunders, explained in the previous edition of Family Matters (p. 5), the Australian Institute of Family Studies is developing a panel survey that will monitor family wellbeing. This is timely, given the Commonwealth Government's new National Families Strategy which is directed towards supporting and strengthening family life in Australia.

The central aims of the Australian Family Panel Survey are to monitor family values, to address core questions for projects in the Institute's three program areas (Children and Parenting, Family and Marriage, and Family and Society), to build a master sample from which sub-samples can be taken when required, and to provide data for swift analysis to inform policy-relevant issues as they emerge. Interviews will be held with adults and older children in the same household thus providing valuable data about relationships and processes within families.

To help in the development of the survey, the Institute organised a two-week visit by Dr Heather Laurie from the Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Essex, Colchester, UK. Dr Laurie manages the British Household Panel Survey - an annual survey which began in 1991, with interviews of some 10,000 individuals from around 5,000 households. During her visit in October 1999, research staff joined in round table discussions about the basic design and development of the Institute's survey. The pilot survey is now being prepared for implementation in early 2000.

For further information about the Australian Family Panel Survey, contact Ruth Weston at the Institute (ruthw@aifs.org.au).

AT THE WORK AND FAMILY AWARDS

The Foundation Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies Dr Don Edgar (left), and the new Director, Mr David Stanton, share anecdotes at the 1999 Australian Financial Review/Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Corporate Work and Family Awards presentation, at Crown Towers in Melbourne, on 15 September 1999.