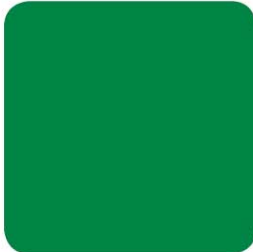
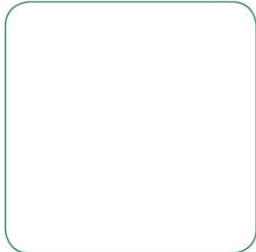
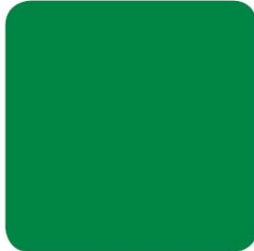
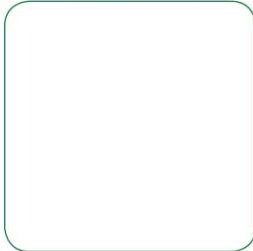
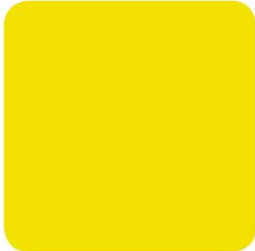



**Australian  
Bureau of  
Statistics**

*statistics for informed  
decision making*



# Family Statistics Towards a Framework

**Susan Linacre**  
**Australian Bureau of Statistics**

*National Family Wellbeing Symposium*  
*"What counts? Defining, exploring and measuring family wellbeing"*

University House, The Australian National University  
Canberra, 20-21 June 2007

# ABS roles and activities

- Statistical leadership and coordination
- Framework, classification and standards development
- Consulting to identify and address needs
  - Includes the Family Statistics Advisory Group
- Data collection and dissemination
- Supporting longitudinal surveys
  - Growing up in Australia
- International involvements

# ABS family-related data sources

- Census of Population and Housing
- Survey of Families in Australia
- Monthly Population Survey
- Family Characteristics Survey
- Family Transitions and History Survey
- Time Use Survey
- Child Care Survey
- Survey of Income and Housing
- Employment Arrangements, Retirement and Superannuation
- Administrative statistics (Births, Marriages, Divorces)

# Drivers for developing family data

- Fundamental importance of families
  - To individual wellbeing
  - To societal wellbeing
- Focus of policy concern and large program expenditures
- Contemporary social issues (e.g.)
  - work and family balance
  - family strength and children's wellbeing
- Significant social change

# Some family-related trends

Between 1992 to 2003

- median age at first marriage increased by 2.3 years (up to 29.2 years) for males and by 2.6 years (up to 27.3 years) for females
- the total fertility rate fell from 1.89 to 1.75 births per woman
- one parent families increased from 17% to 22% (of all families with children aged 0-17 years)
- of all couple families, those with children aged 0-14 years fell from 42% to 38%
- de facto couple families increased from 8% to 12% of all couple families (between 1991 and 2001)
- children in step or blended families rose from 8% to 10% (as a proportion of all children aged 0-17 years in couple families)

## Family-related trends *(contin...)*

Between 1992 to 2003

- female labour force participation rates increased from 52% to 56%,
- in couple families with children aged 0-14 years the proportion with both parents employed increased from 52% to 58%
- lone person households increased from 22% to 25% of all households
- greater acceptance of same-sex couple living arrangements
- increased focus on wellbeing outcomes for children and notion of early childhood intervention has gained in prominence

# A detailed framework being developed

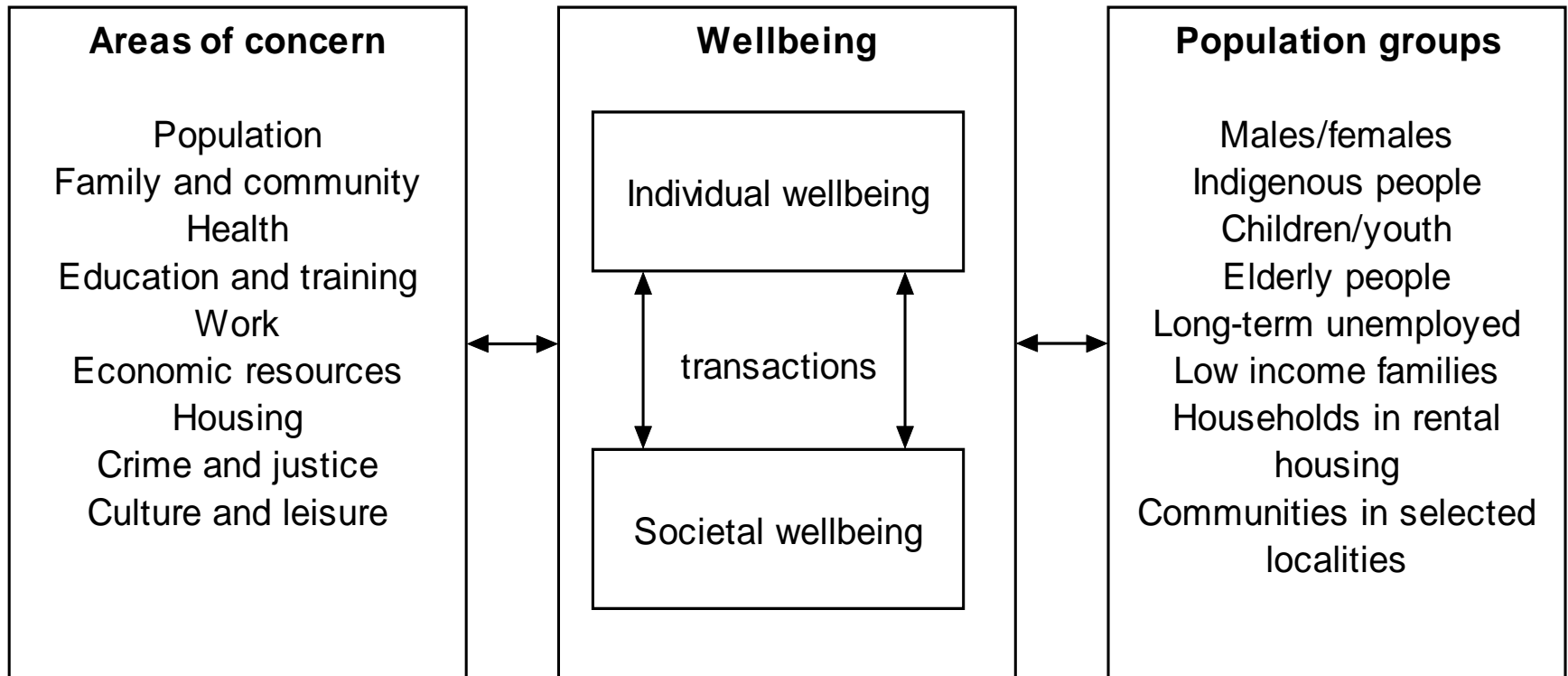
- Comprehensive but concise picture of all that is important
- Platform to support further data development, analysis activities
- Help make good decisions about future priorities

# ABS family statistics framework

## key elements

- Based on ABS framework for measuring wellbeing
- Will recognise different views of 'family'
- Added dimensions of individual and societal resources
- Four major elements
  - Family structures
  - Family transitions
  - Family functioning
  - Family transactions with the wider community

# ABS Measuring Wellbeing Framework

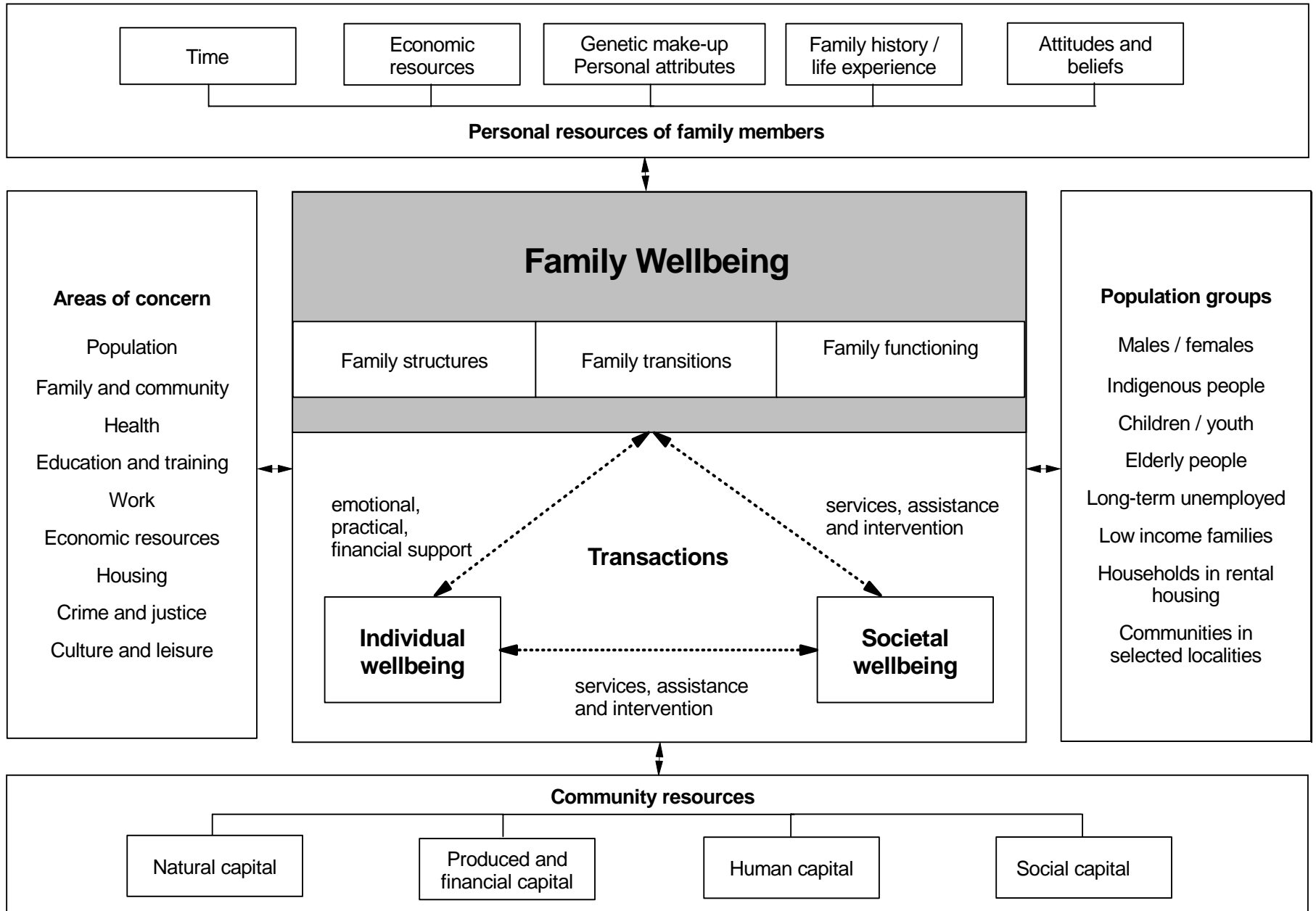


# Family definitions

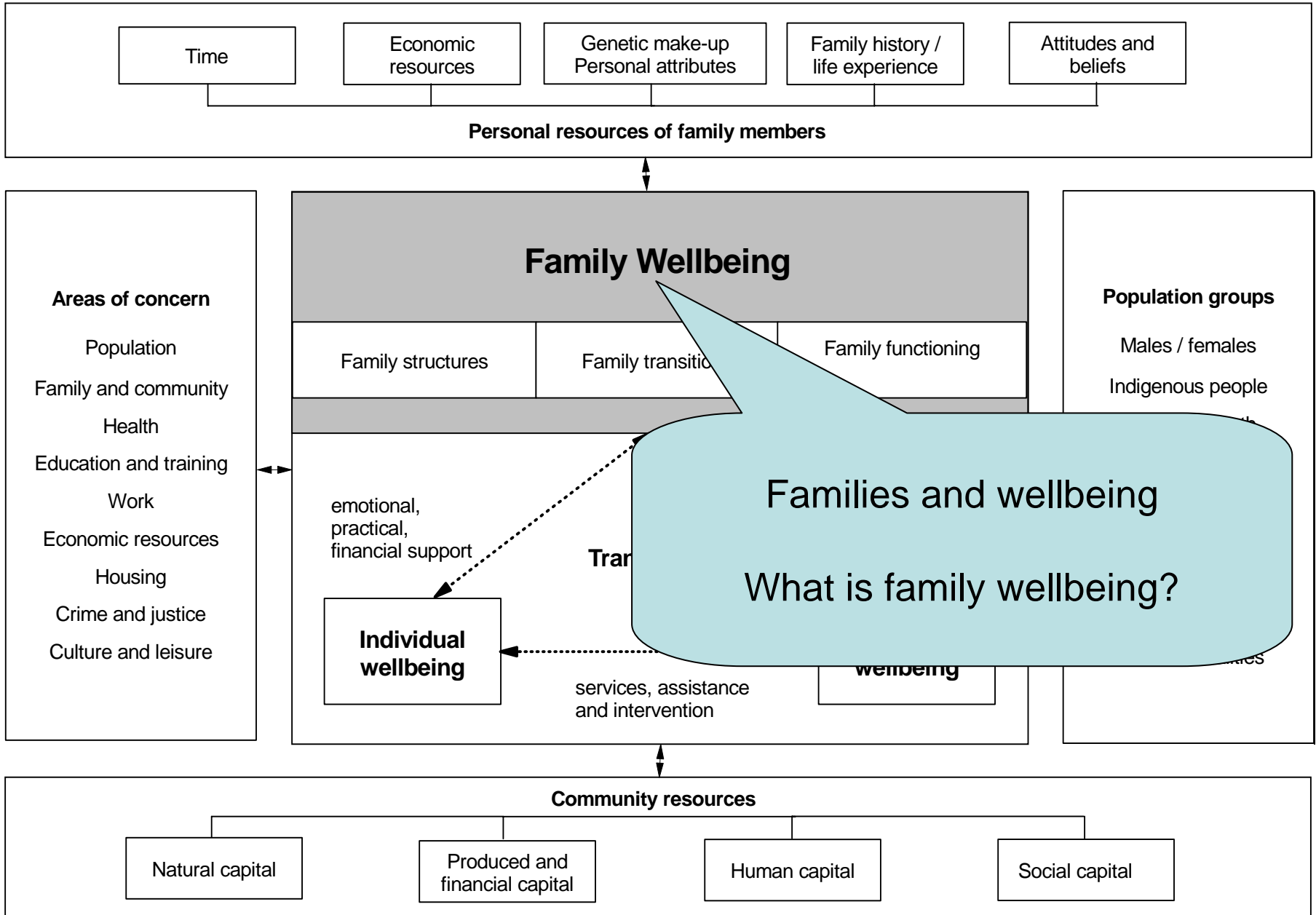
Need to recognise different views of 'family'

- within-household families (i.e. co-resident family members)
- all of a person's 'family members', whether living in the same household or not
- 'family of origin' i.e. the first family in which a person was raised
- based on exchanges of support (within and across households)
- self-definition

# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Families and wellbeing

There are different perspectives which are all important.

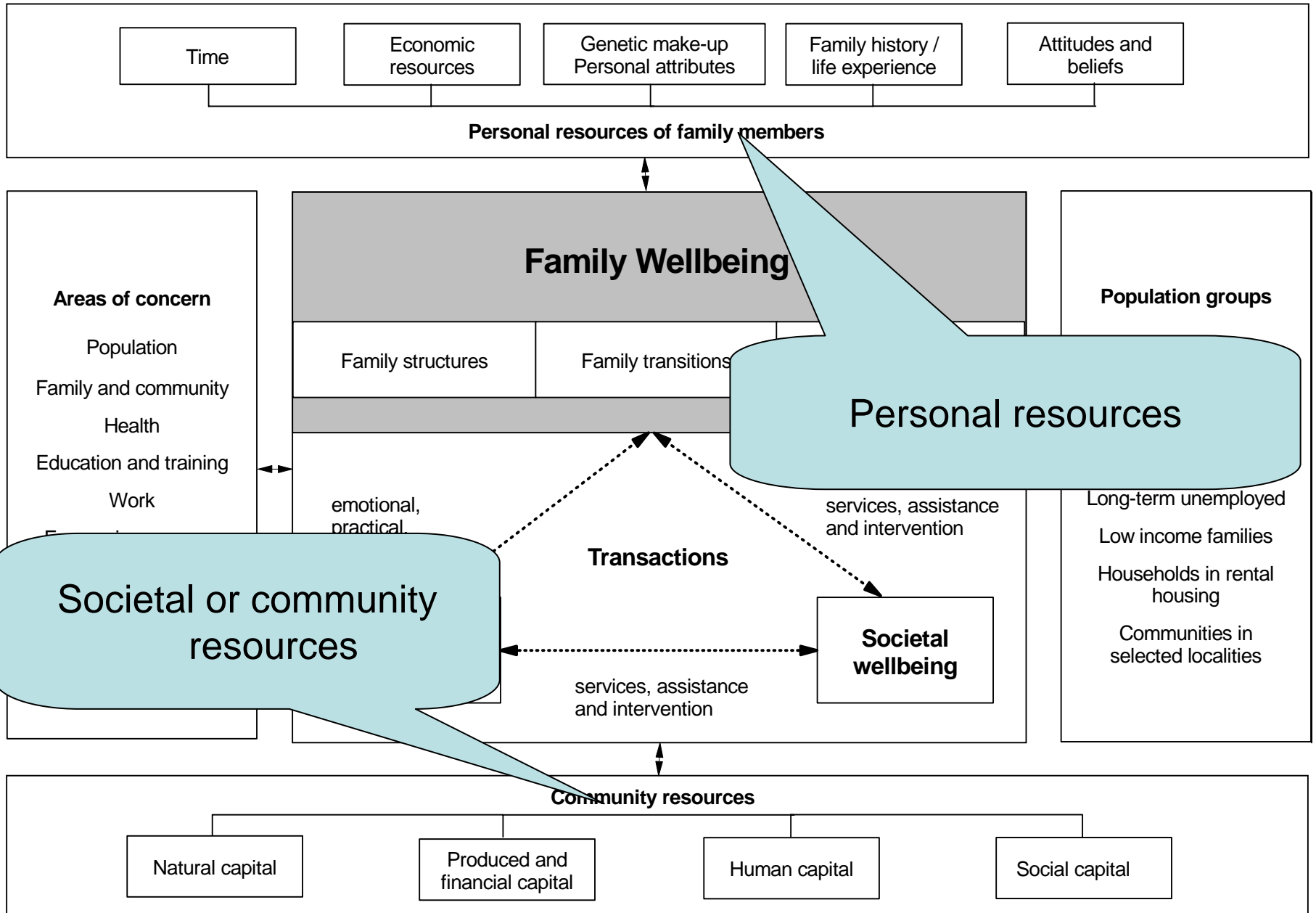
- Wellbeing as a characteristic of individuals, families and societies
- Family's crucial role in mediating individual and societal wellbeing
- The family unit has wellbeing in its own right
- Individual wellbeing in the context of the family situation
- The impact of individual wellbeing on the family

# What is family wellbeing?

Family wellbeing is multi-dimensional.

- The same dimensions of wellbeing identified in the broad ABS Wellbeing Framework apply to families (e.g. health, economic resources, housing).
- The following aspects of families are also associated with individual and family wellbeing.
  - Family structures
  - Family transitions
  - Family functioning
  - Family transactions with the wider community

# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Individual and societal resources impacting on family wellbeing

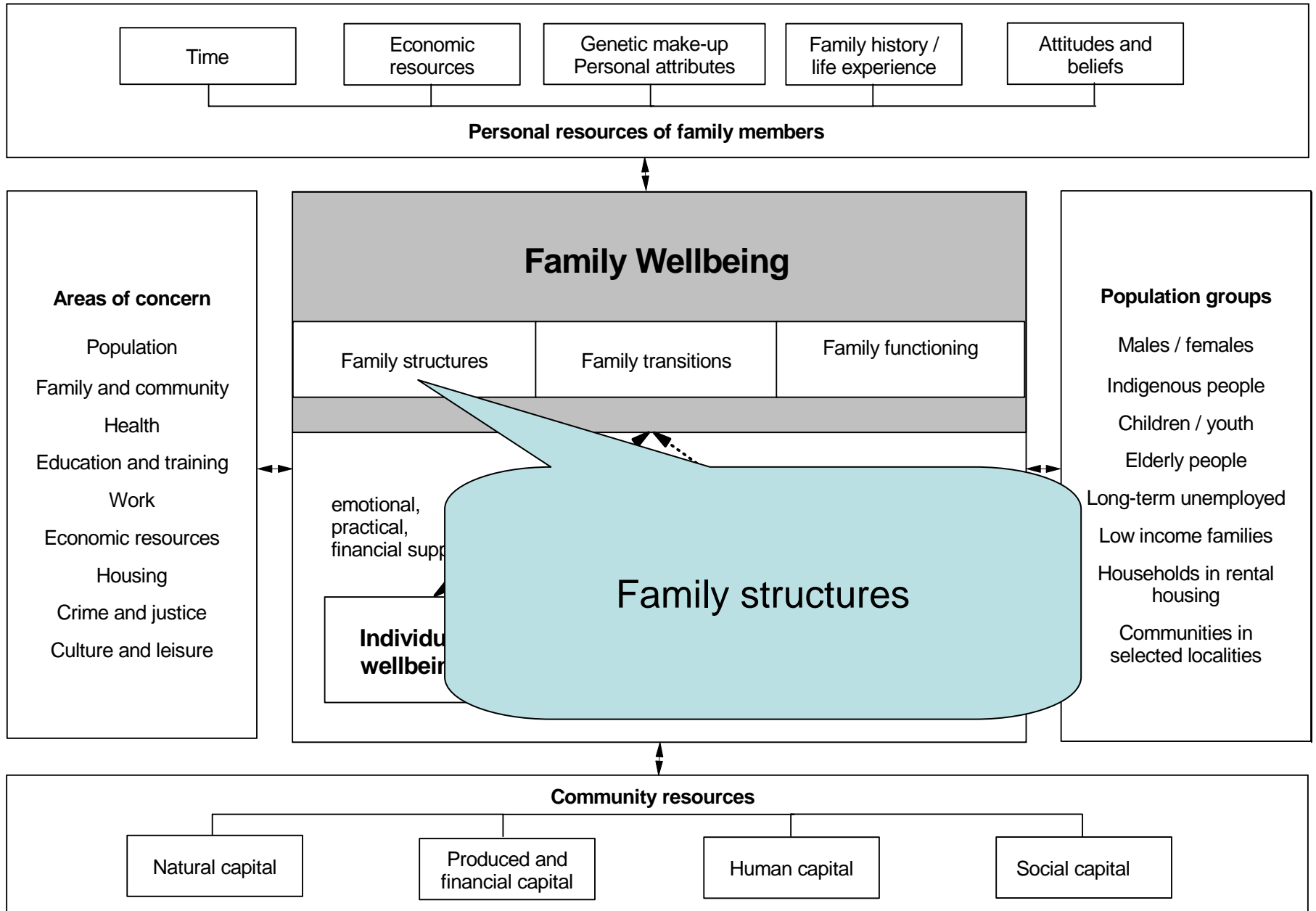
## Individual resources (include)

- Genetic make-up of person and personal attributes
- Family history and life experience
- Time
- Personal economic resources
- Attitudes and beliefs

## Societal resources (include)

- Natural capital
- Economic and produced capital
- Human capital
- Social capital

# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Family structures

Concerned with the description of family networks

## Key concepts

- Relationships, exchanges of support

## Member attributes

- Age, sex, dependency (student status, disability status)

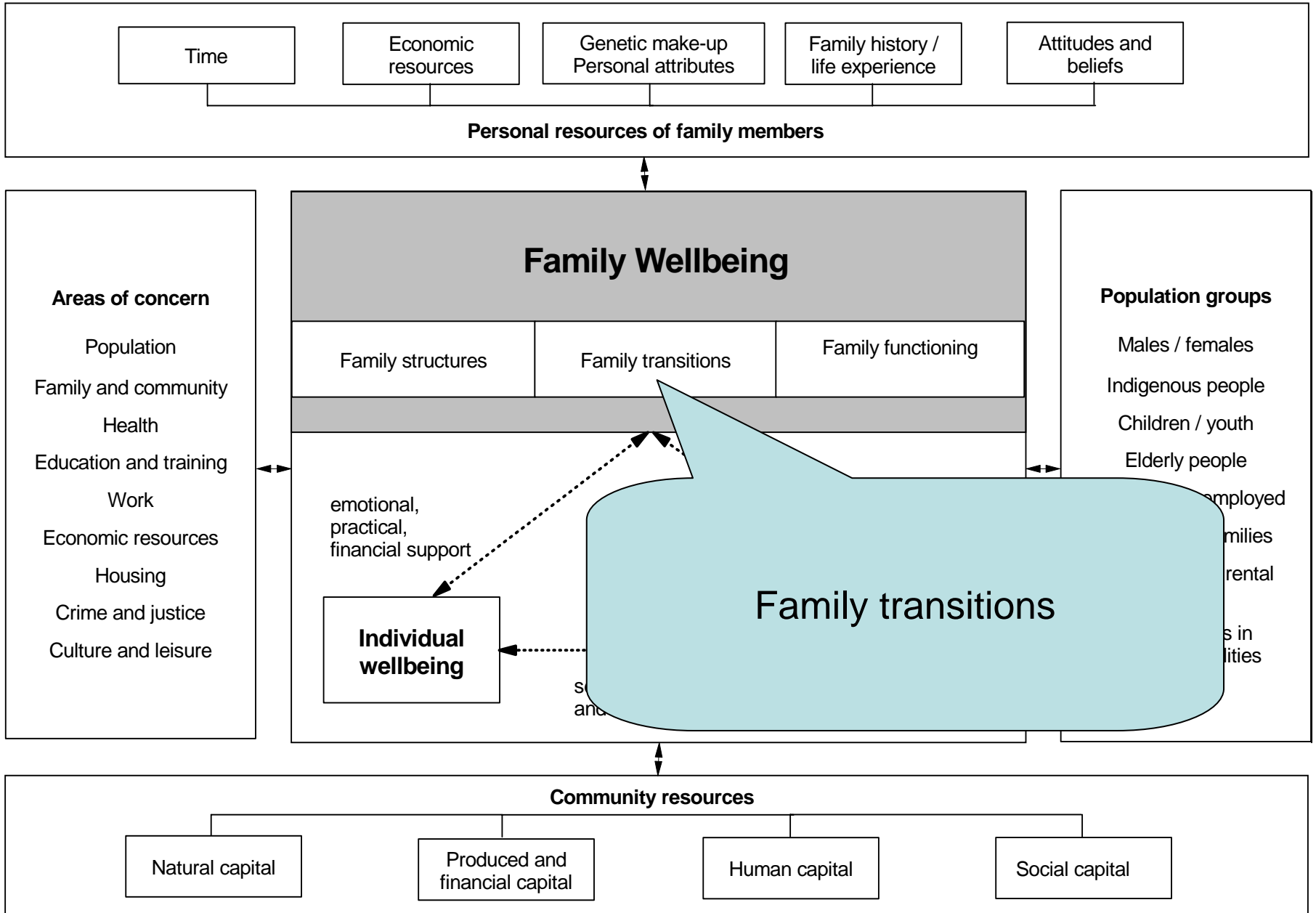
## Within household structures

- Family composition (couple, one parent)
- Step/blended families, grandparent families, same-sex couples

## Beyond household

- Children with a parent living elsewhere (and may spend time in different households)
- Couples living apart together
- Parents and their adult children
- Other significant family connections (e.g. grandparents)

# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Family transitions

Concerned with formation, dissolution and stability or change

## Transition types

- partnering, separation, having child
- workforce participation after having children
- children leaving home, retirement, death of spouse

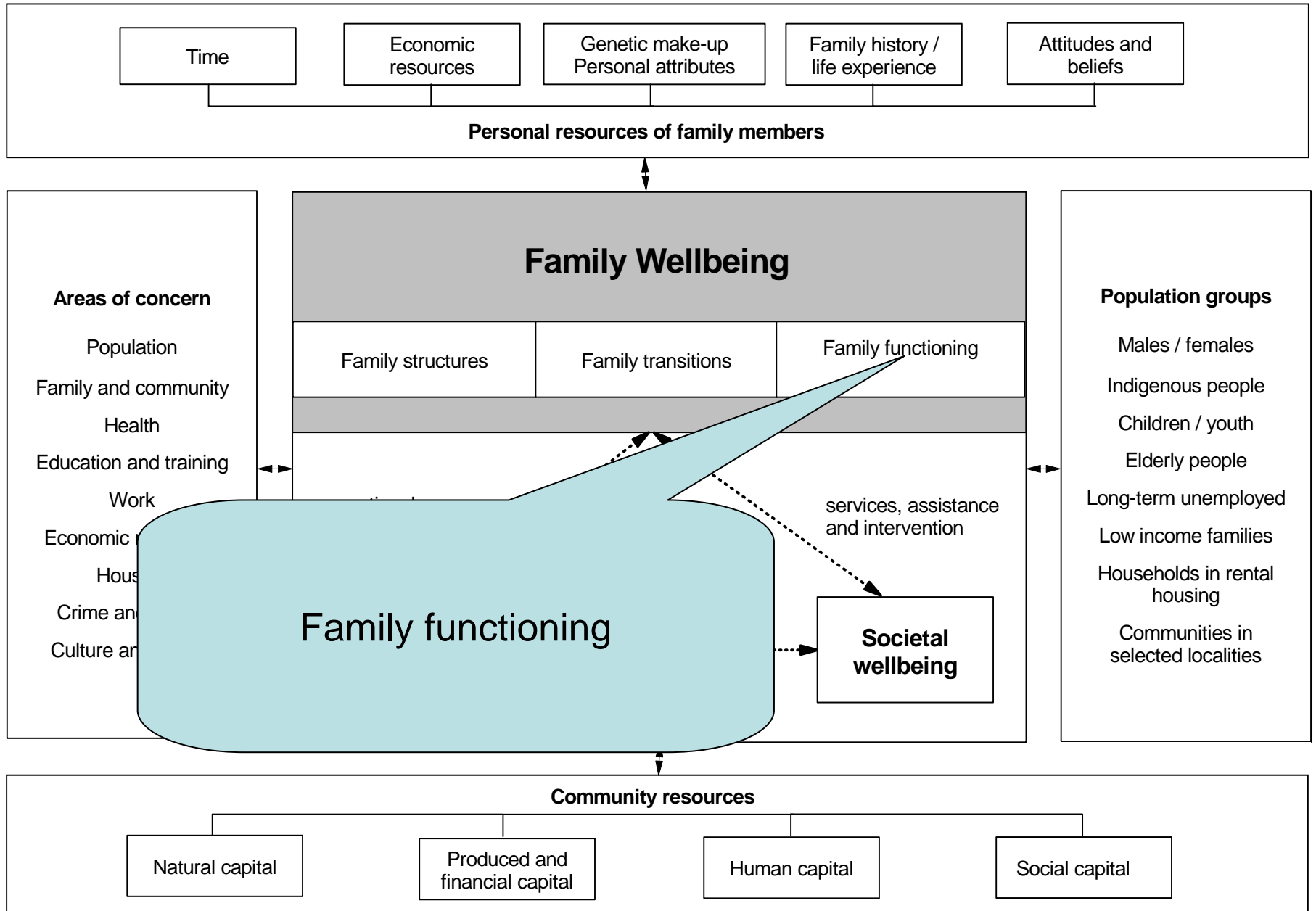
## Timing attributes

- timing of first and any repeated occurrences
- order, spacing, duration, frequency

## Other attributes

- E.g. attitudes and intentions

# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Family functioning

Interactions between family members, often involving combining and sharing resources

## Resources

- Personal (e.g. time, education, own family experience)
- Material (financial, housing)
- Social (networks of friends)

## Roles Who does what?

## Types of functions or processes

- love/emotional support
- parenting and child development
- caring for elderly, sick and disabled members
- communication and shared activities
- instilling social norms

# Family functioning and wellbeing

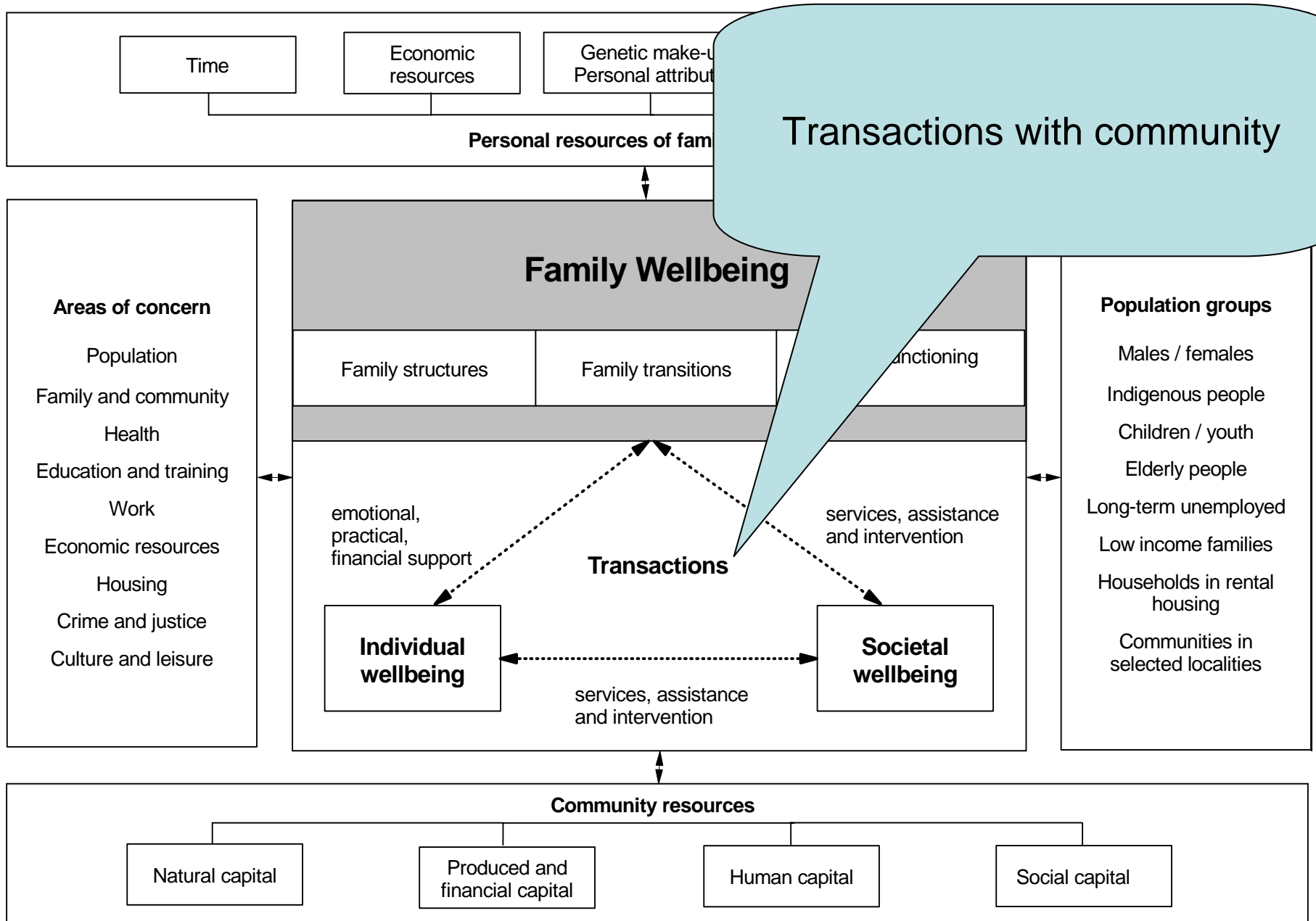
## Good family functioning

- good outcomes for children
- happy and stable family life
- resilience in crisis
- good parental relationship

## Poor family functioning

- poor outcomes for children
- domestic violence
- poor conflict resolution
- poor parental relationship
- poor allocation of resources

# Contextual setting for family statistics



# Transactions with community

Many individual transactions, e.g. getting a job, have a family impact

Other transactions involve the family as a unit

- Income support and family services
- Discounted 'family rate' movie tickets

## Transaction types

- Gaining employment, income from different sources
- Use of family services, e.g. child care, early intervention programs

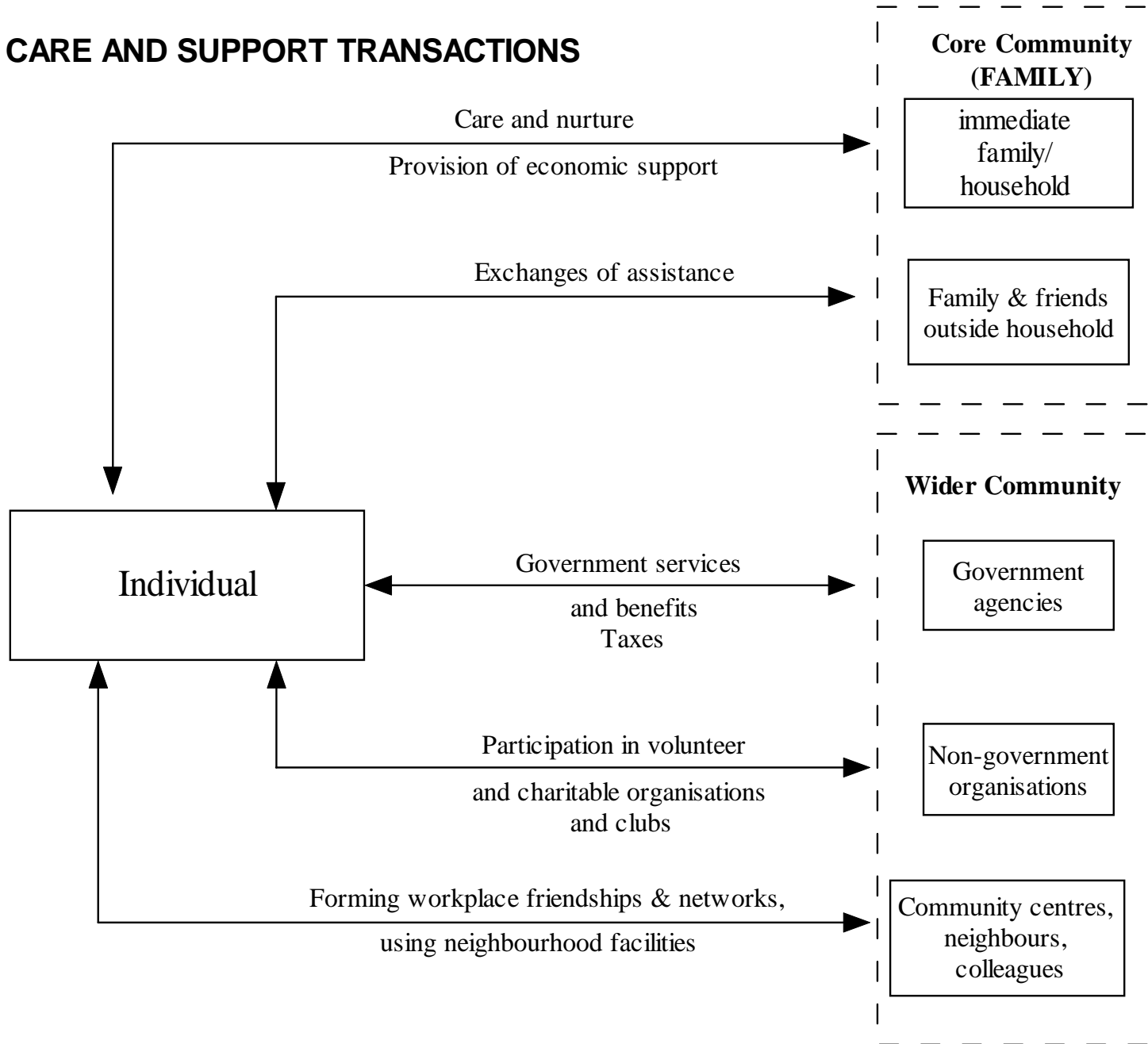
## Players

- Informal (family, friends)
- Businesses
- Government

## Transaction characteristics

- Presence, absence, amount, frequency, quality
- Met and unmet needs and barriers to access

# CARE AND SUPPORT TRANSACTIONS



# Units of analysis

Statistics about 'individuals' and 'families' are both useful, depends on the purpose

For example:

- 'Children in jobless families' statistics are about individuals, but with a very important family dimension, relevant to family wellbeing
- 'Cost of child care to the family' is about families and also sheds light on family circumstances

## Where to from here?

- initial work supported by the ABS Family Statistics Advisory Group
- now developing individual chapters associated with the key framework elements
- draft information paper to be circulated for comment in the first half of 2008
- aiming to publish final information paper by end 2008

# More Information?

## About ABS families data holdings

- See ABS website [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au)
- From the home page click on ‘themes’ and see
  - Families and community
  - Children and youth

## About the families framework project

Contact: Family and community statistics section via,

[horst.posselt@abs.gov.au](mailto:horst.posselt@abs.gov.au) (Director)

or

[heather.crawford@abs.gov.au](mailto:heather.crawford@abs.gov.au) (Assistant Director)