

For immediate release

MEDIA RELEASE

‘Time together’ highlighted during National Families Week 2007 (13-19 May)

Question: What do Senior Australian of the Year, Phil Herreen, Young Australian of the Year, Tania Major, youth advocate, Barbara Holborrow, leading businesswoman, Wendy McCarthy and Ethnic Council Chair, Voula Messimeri have in common?

Answer: These prominent Australians with varied interests all value their families and have signed up to help spread the word about National Families Week 2007 to be held from 13-19 May.

National Families Week celebrates and highlights the critical role of families in Australian society and coincides with the UN International Day of Families on 15 May. Community groups, businesses and government departments around the country have registered hundreds of local events.

The focus of National Families Week 2007 is on encouraging everyone to take time to celebrate the vital role of families and to do things that will improve the all-round physical and emotional wellbeing of their family unit.

CEO of Families Australia, Mr Brian Babington said that “This year’s slogan, *‘FITT Families – Families Investing in Time Together’* reflects the importance of making an investment in family time and remembering that the family unit itself, as well its members, need special tending if it is to be strong.”

“There can be a lot of pressure on families, but they can become stronger if they share time together, doing things that are good for family life”, he said.

“In every week, not just National Families Week, every one of us can take action to really hear and connect - for example, by setting aside time for dinner together, phoning a relative we’ve lost touch with, or by taking an extra 15 minutes each day to talk about what everyone is doing”.

National Families Week is run by Australia’s peak independent not-for-profit organisation representing the needs and interests of families, Families Australia (visit www.familiesaustralia.org.au), on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

To arrange interviews with Brian Babington or NFW 2007 Ambassadors (biogs overleaf), please contact Families Australia on (02) 6273 4885. For more information on NFW 2007 (**including a list of registered public events**) or to download the NFW 2007 logo, go to www.familiesaustralia.org.au.

Disclaimer: Families Australia cannot be held responsible for the personal opinions or views of NFW 2007 Ambassadors.

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Ambassadors for National Families Week 2007

Ms Muriel Bamblett AM - Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Muriel Bamblett, a Yorta Yorta woman, has been employed as CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency since 1999. From 1997 -1999 Muriel was the Chairperson of VACCA. Muriel is active on many boards concerning children, families and the Indigenous community. Muriel is the current Chairperson of Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care - the peak agency representing Indigenous Child and Family Services; Chairperson of the Victorian Ministerial Advisory Council for Child and Family Support. Muriel is the recipient of a number of awards including Robin Clarke Memorial Awards for inspirational Leadership in the field of Child and Family Welfare 2003 and was awarded an AM (Membership in the General Division) in the Australia Day Honours 2004 for her services to the community, particularly through leadership in the provision of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Mr Adam Blakester - Families Australia

Adam was the Executive Officer of NAPCAN until early May 2007. With qualifications in commerce and law Adam's specialty is organising social change towards equity for all living things. His more recent studies have focused on community development, facilitation and social leadership. Adam is a current participant in The Benevolent Society's Sydney Leadership Program. Adam has been on the Board of Families Australia since October 2004.

Ms Gillian Calvert – NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People

The Commission is an independent body reporting directly to NSW Parliament and aims to make NSW a better place for children and young people. Under her leadership, the Commission acts as a bridge between children and government, business and local communities so that kids have a voice in decisions that affect them. Gillian champions issues that are important to kids to improve their lives and circumstances. Through her work at the Commission, children consistently tell her that relationships with parents and family life are vitally important to them, demonstrating that one of the best ways to help kids is to help families.

Ms Sandie de Wolf – Chief Executive Officer Berry Street Victoria

Sandie's career in the child and family welfare field commenced in the early 1970's with the Department of Human Services, where she worked as a case worker and then in senior positions in management and policy development, both in regions and Head Office. Since 1999, Sandie has worked in the community sector, in both policy and management roles. Sandie was appointed Chief Executive Officer of Berry Street Victoria in 1994 when it merged with Sutherland Homes for Children and led the successful amalgamation and expansion of Berry Street Victoria into new regional and practice areas. In all her roles, Sandie has always demonstrated a strong commitment to working together and a passion for improving life opportunities and choices for children, young people and families. Berry Street Victoria is now the largest independent child and family welfare organisation in Victoria, providing services across the State. Sandie has been on the Board of Families Australia since 2002.

Ms Elizabeth Fraser – Queensland Commissioner for Children and Young People

Elizabeth has worked at all levels of government, and lived and worked in a number of countries providing direct services as well as in policy areas. She has managed large scale organisational change and co-ordinated and evaluated major policy and program reforms. Elizabeth started her career as a social worker in public health and child welfare organisations in Canberra and later taught English as a foreign language in Australia, Hong Kong, Sweden and Nigeria. On her return to Australia, she managed non-government funding programs in the overseas aid program in Canberra, managed the program's review of the status of women and oversaw an evaluation of government services to Queensland rural communities. Before being appointed as Commissioner, Elizabeth was General Manager, Corporate and Executive Services in the former Department of Innovation and Information Economy, Sport and Recreation Queensland and Executive Director, Social Policy in the Department of the Premier and Cabinet. She has a long standing commitment to improving client outcomes, particularly for children and young people, and is committed to effective relationships with key stakeholders which contribute to good policy and practice.

Mr Bernard Geary OAM - Victorian Child Safety Commissioner

In May 2005 the Minister for Children appointed Mr Bernie Geary OAM as Victoria's inaugural Child Safety Commissioner. Bernie is widely known and respected for his 30-plus years of working with vulnerable children, young people and their families. This includes being Victoria's first outreach youth worker and serving on the Victorian Youth Parole Board for 17 years. Since his appointment Bernie has been busy consulting with the community, promoting child safety, developing key policy initiatives and initiating projects that focus on the best interests of children.

Dr Marie Leech - Families Australia

As General Manager, Community Services at Mission Australia until March 2007, Dr Marie Leech provided strategic directions and policy for the organisation's 128 community services across the nation. Marie has been on the Board of Families Australia since October 2004.

Ms Jennie Hannan – General Manager, Anglicare WA

Jennifer Hannan is a social worker/family therapist with over 20 years experience and is currently the General Manager - Services for Anglicare WA, overseeing all their clinical programmes including their highly successful contact orders programme, Mums and Dads Forever. Jennie started her career as a social worker in mental health area before training as a family therapist in Sydney. She worked clinically as a therapist in a number of Australian States for 10 years in both the government and non-government sector before taking a variety of management positions with Relationships Australia across two states, culminating in her appointment as deputy CEO of Relationships Australia in WA. Jennie joined Anglicare WA three years ago. Throughout her career Jennie has always had a passion for issues related to children, and this has led her interest in terms of separation issues for children and their treatment in the family court system. She has overseen the development of Anglicare WA's contact orders programme, and the agency's collaborative relationship with the Family Court of WA.

Dr Jeff Harmer – Secretary, Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

Jeff is currently Secretary of the Australian Government's Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. He began his career in the Federal Public Service in early 1978 following five years as a doctoral scholar and tutor at the University of NSW. Jeff was appointed Secretary of the Department of Family and Community Services in October 2004. He has a keen interest in management, leadership and organisational change and development. Jeff is an early starter and likes to do some exercise every morning before work. He is firmly of the view that he won't be very effective the next day unless he gets a reasonable amount of relaxation. Jeff believes spending time with family is very important and his staff know that he is more impressed by what they do while they are at work than by how long they are there.

Professor Alan Hayes – Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies

Professor Hayes took up his appointment as Director of the Australian Institute of Family Studies in September 2004. Immediate past Chair of the Australian Council for Children and Parenting (ACCAP), he is currently Deputy Chair of the Stronger Families and Communities Partnership. Professor Hayes' qualifications in Psychology include a Bachelor of Arts (with first class honours) and a PhD. He has had a longstanding interest in issues related to early intervention and prevention, and their implications for the pathways children and adolescents take through life. The role of families in supporting and sustaining development, across life, is the focus of his current research and scholarship. Alan is married, and is a very proud father whose life has been infinitely enriched by the love of his family.

Mr Phillip Herreen - Senior Australian of the Year

Phillip Herreen was one of Australia's most popular speedway drivers until a horrific crash in 1993, in his last race before retiring from the track, left him confined to a wheel chair. The former national speedcar champion is still inspiring people with his deeds. After benefiting from the enduring support of his wife, family, and the speedway fraternity, Phillip understands what it's like for people who don't have a team to support them, so he fills that gap. Originally from the building industry, he now helps people rebuild their lives, brick by brick. He's a volunteer peer support advocate, working side by side with injured people, giving them encouragement, inspiration, and hints on life in a wheelchair. He's a

mentor to many sports people who have become disabled through accidents. Phillip is a volunteer facilitator helping youth in trouble for driving and other offences.

Ms Barbara Holborow OAM - Youth advocate

Outspoken social activist and former children's court magistrate, Barbara Holborow OAM began her legal career as a solicitor's secretary before becoming a solicitor in the children's courts, then a magistrate. As well as raising her own daughter, she fostered eight children. After 12 years as a magistrate, Barbara retired from the bench in 1994 and became Patron of the Hope for Children Foundation, continuing to fight for children's rights. Barbara was involved in setting up free legal aid for children in NSW, a care court that deals with cases of neglect, and a special jail for first-time offenders aged 18-25 years.

Mr Steve Larkin – Principal, Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies

A Kungarakany man from Darwin, Steve Larkin has been the Principal of AIATSIS since June 2004. Prior to this, Mr Larkin acted as Principal for nine months and was Deputy Principal for two and a half years. Mr Larkin has also been Adjunct Associate Professor in Indigenous Health at James Cook University since 2002, and maintains both an ongoing personal and professional interest/involvement in Indigenous Australian health. He spent more than 17 years working in health and community development programs in urban, rural and remote Aboriginal communities throughout the NT. Mr Larkin's previous positions include National Aboriginal Health Adviser to the Australian Medical Association, inaugural CEO of the Secretariat of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), Assistant Secretary in the Commonwealth Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH), and a short stint managing the national Indigenous Employment Program within the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business.

Ms Tania Major - Young Australian of the Year

Tania Major is a Kokobera woman from Kowanyama Cape York. She has completed a degree in Criminology from Griffith University. She is a Youth Development Project Office at the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. At 21 she became the youngest elected regional councillor in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). In 2007 Tania was announced as the Young Australian of the Year, recognising her leadership efforts and community work with young people in Cape York.

Ms Wendy McCarthy AO - Sydney Community Foundation

Wendy McCarthy is passionate about the power of education. For 40 years she has been a teacher, educator, change agent and public advocate in Australian life. Wendy has worked with government, corporations and community based organisations in education, health, media, conservation and heritage, women's affairs, public health and waste management. She has held national leadership roles in all of these areas. This eclectic combination gives her a unique profile and network nationally and internationally. Wendy has represented Australia internationally at meetings in women's health and leadership, conservation, broadcasting, education and heritage. Wendy has assumed many major leadership roles in the public and private sector. Since 1995, when she left line management, she has consulted to major corporations on mentoring, managing change and diversity and establishing sustainable corporate community partnerships.

Ms Anne McLeish – Director, Grandparents Australia Inc.

Anne is currently National Director of Grandparents Australia and state director of Grandparents Victoria (pro bono positions). She has been on the Board of Families Australia since October 2004. Recent national work includes a national survey of grandparents from every state and territory and all walks of life to determine their views about the future for their grandchildren and the conduct of a campaign to highlight the need for better childcare provision as an issue of national significance. Recent state work includes the conduct of training programs designed to strengthen grandparent's relationship building skills before being placed as volunteers in local governments. Also, Anne is currently Director of an education consultancy business. Education sector work includes the development of a manual for use by students. These manuals focus on the need for young people to develop the generic work related skills – which also happen to be the relationship building skills that grandparents believe young people lack.

Ms Voula Messimeri – Chairperson, Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia (FECCA)

Voula has been involved in the community services field for nearly 25 years, with a particular focus on multicultural affairs and women's issues. As Executive Director of the Australian Greek Welfare Society Ltd (AGWS) she manages an agency with a diverse range of programs including aged & disabilities, childcare, training, counselling and community education. Voula has a strong commitment to social justice and community building and to this end she has served on a number of Boards and advisory bodies.

Mr Bob Nicholson – Chief Executive Officer, YMCA Australia

Bob has forty years employment with the YMCA Movement in Australia. He has extensive experience in Not-for-Profit Management, Voluntary Board Development, community programming and service development. YMCA Australia is a federation of 37 independently incorporated Associations, each governed by a voluntary Board of Directors. The YMCA operates in more than 400 communities across Australia, and each week provides programs and services to more than 500,000 people of all ages. The YMCA Mission is to provide opportunities for all people to grow in body, mind and spirit

Ms Bev Orr – Chair, Australian Foster Carers Association

Bev represents the Australian Foster Care Association which is the only national representative body for foster carers and foster care associations throughout Australia. The membership of the Association is comprised of the peak foster care association of each Australian State or Territory and through them in excess of 12,500 Australian carer families from throughout Australia. Bev has been on the Board of Families Australia since 2002.

Dr Lyndall Strazdins – Research Fellow, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University

Dr Lyndall Strazdins is a research fellow at the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University. Her research focuses on contemporary work and family life, including; work at unsociable times and parent and child wellbeing; time pressures; job insecurity and adult mental health; the impact of high job quality (jobs with autonomy, security, flexibility and family friendly provisions) on parent wellbeing, family functioning and children. Lyndall is a mother of two (17 and 9 years) and still married! Her family (like all families) is precious and she not only researches but lives, every day, the challenge of working and being there as a parent and partner.

Mr Paul Rajan – Director, Community Engagement, Department of the Chief Minister NT

Paul is Director, Community Engagement in the Department of the Chief Minister in the Northern Territory with responsibility for youth, women's, seniors and multicultural policy areas. Paul has worked in both government and community sector human services agencies since 1975. As Principal Policy Officer and later Assistant Director Young Offender Services in the W.A. Department of Community Services and then as General Manager of Creative LINKS Foundation he has significant experience in policy development and analysis and in the practical application of policy in the development and operation of programs. He has spoken widely on social policy issues and is currently a member of the board of Families Australia, Australia's national independent peak body dedicated to promoting the needs and interests of families. Paul has been on the Board of Families Australia since 2004.

Mr Russell Taylor – Chief Executive Officer, NSW Aboriginal Housing Office

Russell (Russ) Taylor is an Aboriginal Australian (Kamilaroi) who was raised in Sydney. He became Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) in Canberra ACT (1997-2003). Russ has extensive managerial experience in the public administration of indigenous affairs, having held various senior policy and program positions in ATSIC and the former Aboriginal Development Commission. Russ is currently a member and/or director of various organizations and management committees, in both the private and public sectors. These affiliations include being a founding Director (and Deputy Chairperson) of the Australian Indigenous Leadership

Centre and a member of the governing Council of the University of Canberra. Russ also currently chairs the National Standing Committee on Indigenous Housing which supports decisions and deliberations of the federal, state and territory Housing Ministers Council.

Ms Prue Warrilow – Chief Executive Officer, Families at Work

Prue Warrilow is the Deputy National Convenor of the National Association of Community Based Children's Services (NACBCS); she is currently the Deputy Convenor of the NSW NACBCS branch and was NSW Convenor for the past 4 years. She represents NACBCS on the National Children's Services Forum and the Commonwealth Child Care Reference Group. Prue is the owner and CEO of Families at Work. Prue has been on the Board of Families Australia since October 2004.

Ms Sharron Williams – Director, South Australia Aboriginal Family Support Service

Sharron is a Nurrungga Woman who has worked for the past 20 years in the Criminal and Social Justice arenas within South Australia. Her experience has included 15 years with Correctional Services through a range of strategic and policy development positions which included being the first Indigenous Public Relations Officer within the Correctional Services System within SA. For the past 5 years as the Director of South Australia, Aboriginal Family Support Services-AFSS is a community based organisation that provides early intervention and crisis intervention and youth accommodation to the greater portion of SA. As the only ACCA within SA much of the community based support services are delivered through AFSS. Sharron's commitment is to community development and community empowerment and her passion is to accountability in management and service delivery at all levels. Sharron has been on the Board of Families Australia since 2002.