



# families australia UPDATE



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THINK FAMILIES, STRENGTHEN FAMILIES, CELEBRATE FAMILIES NO. 2, SUMMER 2009

## Welcome

This issue showcases three important aspects of Families Australia's work: the **National Apology to the Forgotten Australians** in November 2009; the implementation of the **National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children**; and the second **Families Australia National Oration** at Parliament House in October 2009. We also profile the work being done by some Families Australia member organisations.

Please also take a look at our revamped website for more information about Families Australia's work to advance the interest of families at the national level.

As always, we welcome your feedback on our work and comments on issues we may be able to pursue at the national level.

Please contact us on 02 6273 4885 or [admin@familiesaustralia.org.au](mailto:admin@familiesaustralia.org.au)



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## At last – a National Apology to the Forgotten Australians

The National Apology to Forgotten Australians and Child Migrants on 16 November 2009 was a very significant day for us at Families Australia. We have been working with survivors of childhood institutional or foster care since 2006, when we took on responsibility for auspicing and supporting a new national peak body, the Alliance for Forgotten Australians.

We were delighted to see Forgotten Australians' experiences and their abuse and neglect acknowledged by both the Prime Minister and the Opposition Leader, in fine speeches that expressed their sorrow and their horror as well as their admiration for the survivors. Hundreds of Forgotten Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and former child migrants attended to hear the apology in person and to listen to the speeches delivered in Parliament. It was a very emotional day for all Forgotten Australians and their supporters.

The Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA) brings together representatives from support and service delivery organisations in each State and Territory (or active individuals where organisations were not in existence). AFA has consistently called for a national apology, which was the first recommendation of the original Senate report on Forgotten Australians in 2004. AFA's Chair, Caroline Carroll, was appointed to the Advisory Group set up by Minister Jenny Macklin to plan the apology.

We would like to acknowledge the work of all the other organisations and individuals that have advocated for, and worked towards, the apology.

In itself, an apology is important because it acknowledges responsibility and fault. Inside many Forgotten Australians are the voices of children, still asking why this happened to them and still wondering whether their

abuse was in some way their fault. The apology says clearly: *You were in no way to blame. Those responsible are the people who carried out the abuse, the people and organisations meant to oversee them, and ultimately the government that failed to protect you.*

But an apology in itself is not enough. Reparation means undoing the harm. This will involve the provision of targeted services, improved access to services, redress, records access, peer support through drop-in centres, uncapped access to deep trauma counselling, legal support and changes to legislation to support prosecutions and victims' claims.

Government announcements so far are welcome: National Library and National Museum projects recording the history; improved recognition within the aged-care framework; access to records and family search through a national find and connect service; and ongoing funding for national support and advocacy groups, including AFA. Much more is needed, and AFA and Families Australia will continue to argue for the needs of this strong and admirable group of survivors to be met in full.

AFA has produced a booklet about the experiences and needs of Forgotten Australians. Called *Forgotten Australians: Supporting survivors of childhood institutional care in Australia*,

it aims to educate service providers by giving them the historical background and explaining the long-term effects of child abuse and neglect. It is available from Families Australia.



## Second National Oration highlights impact of disasters

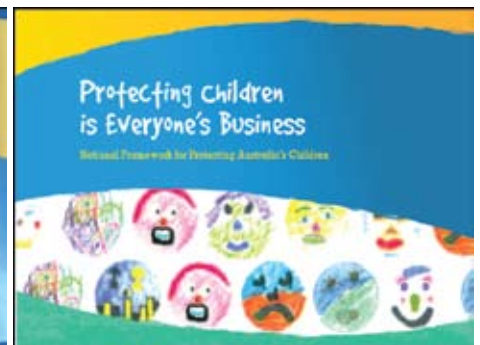
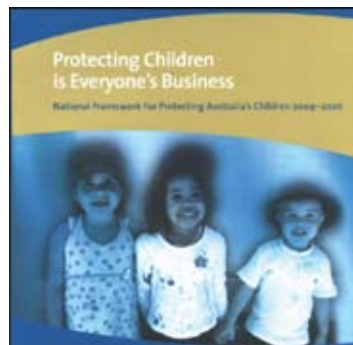
Families Australia was delighted that the second Families Australia National Oration was delivered by Ms Christine Nixon APM, Chair, Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, on 19 October 2009 at Parliament House, Canberra.

Drawing on her many years of eminent community and public service in the police force, in community organisations and, currently, with the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority, Ms Nixon reflected on issues facing communities and families, particularly when they face disasters and other emergencies. Ms Nixon's address before an audience which included the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon. Jenny Macklin MP, highlighted the ways in which communities have been engaged effectively by government authorities in reconstruction efforts after the tragic Victorian bushfires of February 2009. **The full address can be heard via <http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au/oration/index.htm>**

The inaugural Oration in 2008 was delivered by the Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC.



Ms Christine Nixon APM, Chair, Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority



## National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

As reported in the last edition of *Update*, implementation of the first three-year action plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children has commenced.

As the secretariat of the 70-member Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children, Families Australia has been active as the principal conduit of information between the NGO sector and the Federal Government.

In the past couple of months, National Framework implementation activities have included:

- Commencement of work to develop National Standards for out-of-home care. KPMG is the consultant appointed by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) to undertake national consultations, to develop a discussion paper and put forward a proposed set of standards by early 2010.
- A workshop for around 100 participants, held at the University of New South Wales and aimed at developing the National Research Agenda.
- Advancement of work on a Common Approach to Assessment, Referral and Support (CAARS) through a series of consultations around the country.

The next few months will continue to be every bit as busy. Priority attention will be given to developing substantive proposals under the national project relating to Indigenous children, families and communities, including as a result of a national workshop in December 2009.

The Coalition of Organisations Committed to the Safety and Wellbeing of Australia's Children has just marked its second anniversary. Additional members are being sought. **If you would like to know more, please contact Brian Babington at Families Australia on 02 6273 4885.**



## News about Families Australia

- The Families Australia Annual General Meeting was held in Canberra on 19 October 2009. Our 8th Annual Report (available on the Families Australia website) showcased Families Australia's activities during the year, including our representation on a range of Government committees and our increased level of public communication through the media and speeches. We also ended the year in good financial shape!
- A Families Australia members' forum was held in Canberra in October 2009, providing an opportunity to hear from members about family policy issues. This gathering follows on from recent members' forums in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. A sincere thanks to all those who were able to attend.
- We are pleased to announce that Stella Conroy has joined the Families Australia team in a policy role. Stella brings a wealth of experience as a community sector worker and as a postgraduate student at university in Canberra.
- Jennifer Horsfield, our stalwart manager of National Families Week and our office manager, has been at Families Australia for seven years in January 2010. Congratulations Jennifer and thanks for all your great work!

## On the horizon

- Planning is well underway for National Families Week in May 2010. We will let everyone know the dates and theme as soon as possible.
- We are also working closely with Grandparents Australia to convene a national grandparents and kinship carers conference in Melbourne in October 2010. More information will be posted soon.

## Website revamped

Please take a look at the Families Australia website – it contains a lot of new information, including about Forgotten Australians, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, and an audio version of the second national Families Australia Oration.

[www.familiesaustralia.org.au](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au)



## Meet the Board

The Families Australia Board comprises the following 12 members, most of whom represent major national community service organisations:

- **Sandie de Wolf AM** (Chair) – Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia
- **Bev Orr OAM** (Deputy Chair) – Australian Foster Care Association
- **Anne McLeish OAM** (Secretary) – Grandparents Australia
- **Jacqui Reed** – CREATE Foundation
- **Simon Schrapel** – Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia
- **Jennie Hannan** – Family Relationship Services Australia
- **Tony Stevenson** – Mission Australia
- **Prue Warrilow** – Australian Community Children's Services
- **Mark Brooke** – Playgroup Australia
- **Sharron Williams** – Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
- **Dr Marie Leech** – Co-opted, Principal at Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney
- **Paul Rajan** – Co-opted, Northern Territory Department of Education and Training

## Meet some Families Australia members



A national voice for families of children with a disability

The Australian Association for Families of Children with Disability (AAFCD) is a not-for-profit community-based organisation that works alongside families of children and young people with disability. An important part of our role is to provide a link between the direct experiences of children with disability and their families to federal government and other key stakeholders. This link is essential for the creation of a true appreciation of the experiences and challenges that make up the lives of children with disability and their families.

AAFCD believes that children with disability should have the opportunity to live meaningful and fulfilling lives within safe, supportive and appropriate environments. AAFCD works to achieve these aims by: educating national public policy-makers and the broader community about the needs of children with disability and their families; advocating on behalf of children with disability to ensure individual choices and the best possible support and services are available to them from government and the community; informing families about the rights and entitlements of the child with disability to services and support; celebrating the successes and achievements of children with disability.

AAFCD membership is free for families of children with disability.

Our members include an amazing range of people and families across Australia. Members receive our Family Voices magazine twice a year which includes family stories and information about issues relevant to children with disability and their families.

*For more information contact:*

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**Phone: 1800 222 660 | Email: [mail@aafcd.org.au](mailto:mail@aafcd.org.au) | [www.aafcd.org.au](http://www.aafcd.org.au)**



The Family Action Centre (FAC) is a Newcastle University based centre with the unique combination of research, community program development, teaching and learning, and dissemination functions. Recent initiatives have included the Second National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Family & Community Strengths Conference (in partnership with SNAICC), an expanded research program investigating parent/child connection (in partnership with Interrelate), a celebration to mark 20 years of providing trained volunteers to support families with young children and numerous innovative community development programs for improving outcomes for young children.

The FAC has increased its teaching into under-graduate and post-graduate programs to ensure that what has been learnt through research and program development will influence the practitioners of tomorrow.

**[www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/centre/fac)**



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You can stay updated on what Families Australia is doing via our website, [www.familiesaustralia.org.au](http://www.familiesaustralia.org.au)

We always welcome your views and enquiries.

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