

FAMILIES AUSTRALIA: TODAY & TOMORROW

Dr Brian Babington
CEO, Families Australia
Families Australia Annual General Meeting,
Canberra, 7 November 2016

Chair, Board, members, staff and guests,

This year Families Australia turned 15. In my opinion it was one of Families Australia's most successful years in utilising our skills, networks and reputation to help shape national policy design and implementation.

Families Australia's job is to bring people together, in a collaborative spirit, to learn from each other and to find ways to improve the wellbeing of the most vulnerable families and children through well-grounded national policies and programs.

This year, we played the leading role in designing the Third Action Plan 2015-18 under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children. It was great to see emphasis on early prevention and the first thousand days for a child. It was also good to see these efforts reflected in the May 2016 Federal Budget allocation to the Third Action Plan.

The Child Aware Approaches Conference was another success as we set a record in terms of numbers of delegates. The conference has found its place as an important national gathering of policymakers, practitioners and researchers who focus on advancing child safety and wellbeing.

National Families Week set a record in terms of participation in community-level events. Families Australia's membership numbers continued to be strong, with over 800 organisations and individuals all of whom contribute, either in cash or kind, for their involvement. And, as you will see from the financial statements, Families Australia ended the year on a sound financial basis.

I would like to thank our members and the Australian Government, especially the Department of Social Services. I appreciate greatly the support of the Board. Thank you to our auditor. None of our achievements would have been possible without the work of a brilliant staff team: I thank them most sincerely.

I wish to offer special thanks to our Chair, Prue Warrilow. Because the organisation has now gone well beyond its original phase of establishment, she shouldered a responsibility to lead some important and necessary changes. I admire her for doing the right thing when it was needed. This is leadership.

I am tremendously optimistic about Families Australia so long as we do not stand still. If we are to represent the breadth of issues implied in the name of the organisation, it is important to keep striving to engage the widest possible range of stakeholders, such as those from health, education and business sectors, as well as prioritise innovative, early intervention approaches.

This reflects the way social policy is being devised and implemented in Australia today. We need to work in ways that embrace complexity and public, private and community sector integration.

Families Australia will thrive if it expands its collaboration, internal and external diversity, and speaks to an increasing range of issues affecting families.

Already we are doing some of that, for example, by recently engaging at Ministerial level on welfare reform and being involved in the COAG National Summit on Reducing Violence Against Women and their Children. But, there is much more to do.

I look forward to Families Australia's further growth in these ways, and I thank you for your support through the year.