

Families: the heart of our society

National Families Week 2018

Address by Dr Brian Babington, CEO, Families Australia

at the Department of Social Services' National Office, Canberra, 16 May 2018

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea and community. I wish sincerely to pay respects to them and their cultures, and to elders past, present and future.

Thank you all for supporting National Families Week. The Department has always gone to great lengths to celebrate and I've been looking forward to this gathering. Over 125,000 people will participate in community events around Australia this week. It offers everyone a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what families mean and how they enrich our lives.

Events are being held from the Torres Strait Islands to Tasmania, from Port Macquarie to Perth. Many schools and other community organisations are holding events such as fun days, BBQs, photo and poetry competitions, morning teas and seminars to highlight the importance of family.

I wanted to talk briefly about three events that provide a glimpse of the range and diversity of the Week's activities and their engagement with the wider community.

On a musical note, the renowned Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra is going to celebrate with two special performances with a focus on children in the Clarence municipality.

In Murwillumbah, NSW, there'll be a Kinship Festival to connect Aboriginal children and families with country, community and culture through shared learning and participation. That festival will incorporate a community Corroboree, a giant sand, soil and ochre art installation made by participants, weaving, and a bush tucker lunch.

One Sydney school with a large number of students from Syria and Iraq is inviting the school community to share their favourite family moments with a family photo display, a morning tea to welcome families, and children will share their favourite family photo with their peers by sharing the story from each of their family photos.

I strongly believe that, *whatever form they take, however we define them, and despite the many challenges that inevitably face them from time to time, families are our most time-honoured settings for giving and receiving love, understanding and nurturing.*

I want to thank DSS most sincerely for supporting the Week, as it has done each year since 2003. Thank you for the important work you do at the national policy level. At its essence, Families Australia exists to support that work by bringing together the views, experience and wisdom of our member organisations around Australia.

It is Families Australia's great privilege to convene National Families Week with your support and the generous contributions of hundreds of community organisations that work so hard to support stronger families and communities around Australia.