

Taking time for family: National Families Week 2019
Address by Dr Brian Babington, CEO, Families Australia
at the Department of Social Services' National Office, Canberra, 14 May 2019

I begin by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we meet and paying respects to their Elders, past, present and future. I want to thank the Department for supporting National Families Week. In particular, I wish to thank the Secretary, Kathryn Campbell AO CSC, and Liz Hefren-Webb, for their participation.

Over the coming week, over 125,000 people will participate in hundreds of community events around Australia. These events will give everyone a wonderful opportunity to reflect on what families mean and how they enrich our lives. The range of events is extraordinary, including family fun days, BBQs, photo and poetry competitions, morning teas and seminars to highlight the importance of family.

I would like to tell you briefly about three of these events. Camden Council will be hosting a week of events, including playgroups, picnics, tree planting and 'Painting the town READ' workshops to encourage literacy and reading.

Organisations in Victoria are holding 'Connected Families' panel discussions for parents and professionals working with young people and families. These seminars will promote discussion about strengthening family relationships and decreasing anxiety through the wiser use of technology limits.

At Lake Macquarie, there is going to be a 'You're Kidding Me' Expo that will bring together over 60 organisations that support children and families. Parents will be able access information on baby health, disability supports, playgroups, nutrition, and safe sleeping. There will be a range of talks including CPR for babies and nutrition for new mums.

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

I think we need to think more about the importance of families in our lives and the lives of others. National Families Week is a great opportunity to pause and take stock of how we can all work for greater family wellbeing. This week, I think particularly about my maternal grandmother, with her relentless optimism and unquenchable love of travel and lifelong learning.

Finally, I just want to say that, at its essence, Families Australia as a peak, national, not-for-profit organisation exists fundamentally to support your work by bringing together the views, experience and wisdom of our member organisations around Australia working daily with families and children.

As many of you will know, we have worked closely with the Department over many years to help build and implement the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020. This is ground-breaking national social policy in which we can all take pride. We are looking forward to further close collaboration as we chart ways forward on national policy for children and families beyond 2020 when the National Framework comes to its end.

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

Secretary, I wish to present you with a certificate and badge in appreciation of your role as a National Families Week Champion.