



MEDIA RELEASE

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NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS TO GATHER IN MELBOURNE FOR FAMILIES CONFERENCE

The 15th Australian Institute of Family Studies conference will be held next week at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from Wednesday 25 July to Friday 27 July, 2018.

The conference themed 'What matters most to families of the 21st century?' brings together 600 delegates including leading international and national social policy experts. The conference features a record 61 sessions and 245 presenters covering a wide range of topics, including economic issues, parenting, early childhood education, mental health issues, family law, child protection, family violence, and the future of families.

Australian Institute of Family Studies Director, Anne Hollonds said the conference will address the complex issues facing families of all kinds.

"The event will explore 'what matters most to families' and what helps or hinders them to do their job well. This unique gathering of thought leaders, policy-makers, researchers and service providers offers an important multidisciplinary platform for advancing knowledge about Australian families," Ms Hollonds said.

"The 245 speakers we have assembled from an unprecedented number of submissions provide a rich depth of knowledge and offer new evidence to inform solutions for tackling the issues that matter most to families."

Key international presenters include:

Ms Nora Spinks, the Vanier Institute of the Family, Canada will address the crucial need to understand families – their experiences, expectations and aspirations - to develop the most effective evidence-based policies, programs and practices. She will share the experience of Canada in tackling complex social problems similar to those we face in Australia.

Professor Brigid Featherstone, University of Huddersfield, UK, will argue that the policies and practices that have been developed to protect children have come to exemplify 'a punitive and neglectful state' in many jurisdictions. She argues it is time to revisit the fundamental assumptions of child protection and explore more hopeful, socially just policies and practices.

Dr David Halpern, UK Behavioural Insights Team, (via pre-recorded interview) is the Chief Executive of the UK Behavioural Insights Team, and the What Works Advisor to the UK government. He argues that governments need to "design everything we do around people, not expect people to redesign their lives around us".

These international leaders are joined by an amazing collection of the best and brightest minds in all fields committed to improving the wellbeing of families.

Visit the [Conference website](#) to access the full program and all session times.

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