The Institute is beginning the process of developing its next three-year Research Plan at an exciting time for family policy in Australia. As I signalled in my last report, we are seeking to ensure that Institute research continues to connect to the needs of families and communities, and to the work of those who frame policy and deliver the many services that support and strengthen families.

To this end, the Institute will hold research consultations in all capital cities, and a selection of regional venues, to receive input from key stakeholders as part of the process of developing our Research Plan. In holding these meetings, we return to a practice established by our founding Director, Dr Don Edgar, who on the establishment of the Institute in 1980 consulted extensively to gain insights into the needs and priorities of families across the nation.

Since coming to the Institute, I have been daily impressed by the extent to which Institute work is used and seen to be of value and relevance. Collectively we are committed to ensuring that continues and grows. It is thus imperative that the Institute gains a sense of the varied priorities and needs, across the nation, in order to address in an effective, timely fashion those that fall within our capacity. While it will not be possible to include every topic, I think that this is a good way to ensure that the work of the Institute is relevant. As far as possible, we aim to be positioned to anticipate the future needs of policy makers and practitioners, while reflecting accurately the current concerns of Australian families and communities.

The consultation process starts in mid August 2005 and will be completed later in the year.

Honour for former AIFS Board member

I was delighted to see the recognition of the many contributions, by Dame Margaret Guilfoyle in the Award of a Companion (AC) in the General Division of the Order of Australia in this year’s Queen’s Birthday list. As many readers would be aware, Dame Margaret served as a member, and presiding member, of the Institute’s Board of Management, from 1992 to 2000, and her support of the work of the Australian Institute of Family Studies was and remains greatly appreciated. In addition to her work as a Senator and Minister, Dame Margaret has maintained an active involvement in a wide range of organisations and a continued commitment to Australian families. We convey our heartiest congratulations to Dame Margaret on yet further recognition of her outstanding contributions to the nation.

New Zealand visitors

In July 2005, we welcomed to the Institute Judge Boshier and his associates, Denise Udy and Melanie Gudsell, from the New Zealand Ministry of Justice. This visit provided an opportunity to share insights into the trends and developments in family law, and the support of families facing and negotiating relationship transitions.

Also in July 2005, we were pleased to host the visit of Dr Charles Waldegrave, Director of the Social Policy Unit within the Family Centre, in New Zealand – a visit that provided a valuable opportunity to exchange views on the policy priorities related to families in our two nations and to explore opportunities for collaborative research. There are a number of common areas of interest that should provide a fertile field for future collaboration.

AIFS links in the East Asia region

In collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services, the Institute continues to strengthen its cooperative links with countries in the East Asia region. A key feature of current work involves assisting the Vietnam Commission for Population, Family and Children (VCPFC) in the design of its first National Survey on Families. This survey is also the first of its kind to be funded by the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), New York. UNICEF is therefore very interested in monitoring the entire process, including the Institute’s current and future involvement.

In July 2005, AIFS Principal Research Fellow Ruth Weston spent a week in Hanoi, working with members of the VCPFC and representatives of other Vietnamese organisations who are involved in the planning and implementation of the survey, along with the Program Officer, UNICEF Vietnam Country Office. The team made excellent progress in setting up the framework and overall design of the survey. Indeed, the week was seen as a resounding success by all participants. This endeavour represents a precursor to a national workshop held in Hanoi in August 2005, the aim of which was to flesh out the details of questionnaire measurement and survey implementation.

Child Support Taskforce

Professor Patrick Parkinson and the members of the Child Support Taskforce are to be congratulated on their excellent and incisive report In the best interests of children: Reforming the Child Support Scheme, released in June 2005. Institute researcher Bruce Smyth was a contributor to the Taskforce, as were our past Director, David Stanton (as Deputy Chair of the Taskforce), and our Deputy Director, Research, Matthew Gray. The research undertaken for the Taskforce by Bruce Smyth and Institute colleague Ruth Weston has been recently published as AIFS Research Report No.13, A snapshot of contemporary attitudes to child support. (See the article summarising key findings of the Institute report.)
Henry was born Gunter Freund in Berlin in 1923. In 1939, he left Germany on one of the last ships bound for England, following his father, Dr Heinrich Alexander Freund, “whose brilliant scholarship in Australia. His presence will be missed in the corridors of academic and international socio-legal conferences, and in the hearts of the many lawyers who studied under him.

Henry was both a gentleman and a scholar. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends. He will take solace in knowing that his books will continue to be used by others for many years.

Henry was both a gentleman and a scholar. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends. He will take solace in knowing that his books will continue to be used by others for many years.

Henry was both a gentleman and a scholar. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends. He will take solace in knowing that his books will continue to be used by others for many years.

Henry was both a gentleman and a scholar. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends. He will take solace in knowing that his books will continue to be used by others for many years.

Henry was both a gentleman and a scholar. We offer our sincere condolences to his family and friends. He will take solace in knowing that his books will continue to be used by others for many years.

He had three stints of three months in Germany – one researching at Munich, one doing a series of lectures at 18 German universities, one as Visiting Fellow at Freiberg. His textbook on Family Law is still widely used throughout Australia, and his published monograph on the legal aspects of sex change is still in demand.

On his retirement in 1988, Henry moved to Hobart, where his legal career had begun. Here, he served as Mootmaster and part-time lecturer at the University of Tasmania Law School. He did some mediation, and followed his interests in theatre, music, bushwalking, travel and red wine.

The Institute is well positioned to continue the contributions to Australian society that have been the hallmark of its first quarter century. Families are the foundation of any country, and understanding their characteristics, capacities and challenges is vital to the nation and its future prospects. The Australian Institute of Family Studies has a rare privilege and a great responsibility to provide the best possible information to guide policy and practice to the benefit of all Australian families. As we enter our next quarter century we renew our commitment to discharge these obligations to the best of our ability.