Families, welfare and social policy, the focus of this issue of *Family Matters*, is supported by a considerable amount of information contained in the institute's database, Australian Family & Society Abstracts.

All of these references are available on interlibrary loan from the Institute's Family Information Centre, with some of them also being available online.

### Welfare dependency


A project conducted by the Australian Institute of Family Studies on behalf of the Department of Family and Community Services, this literature review examines Australian and international literature and research in the area of transgenerational income support dependency. The literature is covered under the following headings: intergenerational mobility/rigidity and its effect on the intergenerational transmission of attitudes and values; community/family vs individual characteristics; family structure; the new underclass in Australian society; ethnicity and its effect on welfare dependency; changing work patterns and how these affect people's employment opportunities and choices; attitude to work and its effect on intergenerational unemployment.


This article discusses the effects of the social welfare system on unemployment. The author examines the notion that the availability of unemployment and related welfare benefits has the potential to increase unemployment by acting as a disincentive both to searching for and accepting jobs. An important development in the analysis of the reasons for high levels of unemployment has been the increasing acknowledgment of the effects of a whole range of social benefits provided by government. As well, the author notes that the interplay between the tax and social welfare systems is also relevant, and that a link exists between the extent of unemployment assistance and the extent of regulation of employment conditions. The growing awareness of the potential for unemployment and related welfare benefits to add to unemployment numbers has resulted in increasing attention being given to the issue. The author concludes that there is a case for reducing the welfare liberalism line and welfare dependency.


In Australia, much of the debate about the consequences and effects of intergenerational welfare dependency has relied on anecdotal evidence and select case studies, reflecting both the limited information available and the difficulties inherent in measuring the phenomenon. This paper reports the initial findings of a review of Australian and international literature, exploring the adverse social effects of intergenerational reliance on income support. Questions asked are: is there Australian evidence to support the existence of intergenerational income support dependency and if so, what is the magnitude of the problem; what do the longer term trends appear to be; and what is the role of factors (both institutional and personal) such as depressed local labour markets, income support arrangements, low incomes, poor labour market attachment, low educational attainment and poor health?


Noting that it is commonplace that terminology can have a powerful influence on debates in social welfare, the author questions a particular usage of two apparently descriptive labels: 'welfare dependency' and 'poor', in two recent papers: 'Poor families, poor children: who cares for the next generation?' by B. Birrell, B. and V. Rapson, published in *People and Place*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1997; and 'Welfare dependence in Australia' by B. Birrell, C. Maher and V. Rapson, published in *People and Place*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1997. The author presents arguments for his criticisms of the idiosyncratic usage of these labels and of how social security data have been used by the authors of these articles.

### Welfare Reform


The United States has recently implemented a unique set of social policy reforms under legislation known as the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act, reforms which have introduced the idea of time-limited social assistance. If welfare recipients do not participate in schemes that aim to place them in work after a specific period, their benefits will be cut. To understand why such reforms have been introduced, the author first investigates the specific social and economic trends that have influenced policy makers in the United States. She then provides a description of the Act, as well as other social policy developments that have been implemented with the Act as part of a strategic plan to reduce welfare dependency. These include changes to education and in-work benefits through the tax system. Outcomes and implications of the reforms are examined, including policy outcomes of the decrease in welfare caseloads and the
greater emphasis by the government on providing assistance to low income earners and welfare recipients. Impacts on labour market dynamics and poverty levels are also discussed. Finally, the paper draws out some of the features of the reforms that may provide useful frameworks for innovative changes, and highlights issues that other countries will need to consider if they wish to embrace similar ideas of reform.


Recently the moral superiority of the social democratic view on welfare has been challenged. This commences with questions of the social right to be a citizen-consumer, the idea of the virtuous market, marketing the non-market voluntary sector, and how to construct a new relationship between the state and society which promotes active rather than passive citizenship.


This paper proposes that using the criterion of transparency to evaluate policy discourse in the public sector may be fruitful and that one of the defining aspects of such transparency concerns sensitivity to policy trade-offs. The intellectual and institutional implications of conducting and evaluating public discourse are considered and in order to explore the social and historical contextualisation of policy, the application of a particular model of state funding to the voluntary sector (purchase of services contracted out by government) in New Zealand in the 1990s is investigated. This model is examined in terms of both the benefits that, according to official policy discourse, were expected to flow from it and the potential costs for the voluntary sector. Using this analysis the social context of welfare reform within which this policy has been implemented is explored. Conclusions indicate that transparency in policy discourse is a good discipline for policy making in that it provides an intellectual structure for debate and it encourages the location of policy analysis within a real social and historical context.


This book assesses the means by which Australian Labor might renew its program for social democracy. The author declares as irrelevant the old politics of the Left/Right divide, and embraces a different set of values and policies – social responsibility, equality of opportunity and merited reward, public mutuality and the whole-sale devolution of governance. He shows why fresh solutions to the problems of unemployment, economic sovereignty, tax and welfare reform are needed, and how they might work. Ideas are offered to reconcile the global economy with the values of a decent society. The book proposes the means by which Labor might seek to address each of the major issues now prominent in the new political economy. It commences with questions of economic internationalism and distribution, then examines reforms to the welfare state, and finishes with an engagement in the social capital debate. The viability of a new program of social democracy is examined, spanning the economics of global capital to the politics of community and location.


This article examines recent debates relating to the provision of welfare in Australia. It begins with an assessment of the trends towards the acceptance of the philosophy of mutual obligation by governments, commentators and lobby groups, traces the process of the movement from welfare from ‘entitlement’ to ‘obligation’ and argues that this is being used to justify a reworking of the relationship between the citizen and the state. The paper argues that a ‘genuine’ mutual obligation has always been part of the Australian welfare system.


A range of concepts are explored in this collection of papers from the National Social Policy Conference, Sydney, 1997, providing a balance between analytical, theoretical and practical approaches to social policy. An introductory statement by Sheila Shaver discusses the conference theme, ‘States, Markets, Communities: Remapping the Boundaries’, and the reasons for its particular relevance at this time. Conference papers, which are individually indexed, are: The social shaping of work: struggles over new boundaries by Belinda Probert; When markets fail: social policy at the turn of the century by John Myles; Research strategies for measuring indigenous poverty by Jon Altman and Boyd Hunter; Empty streets: current policy relating to long-term homelessness by Anne Coleman; The economic status of indigenous sole parent families: a challenge for social policy by Anne Daly and Diane Smith; Administering the unemployed citizen by Mitchell Dean; Does Australia have a problem of working poverty? by Tony Eardley; All work and no play? Australia’s youth today by John Landt and Simon Fischer; Poverty measurement in Australia: different assumptions, different results by Maureen McDonald, Jane Griffin-Warwicke and Damian O’Rourke; Opportunities and problems to the welfare/work divide: the CDEP Scheme in Australian social policy by Will Sanders; and Volunteering in the post-retirement years by Jeni Warburton.


There are many inaccurate assumptions in the Australian community about lone parents and the level of assistance they receive from the government, states this document. It provides information in response to the most commonly raised questions and concerns about lone parents. Issues addressed include: Is the social security system favouring single mothers over married parents? Is living in a lone parent family bad for children? Why aren’t separated parents supporting their own children instead of the taxpayer?


Australian sole-parent families represent 18 per cent of Australian families with children, while indigenous sole-parent families constitute 34 per cent of indigenous families with children. Although considerable research has been undertaken into the socioeconomic characteristics of Australian sole parent families, and how to construct a new relationship between the state and society which promotes active rather than passive citizenship.


This paper argues that the JET Scheme, a jobs, education and training scheme for sole parent pensioners, is limited and insufficient to its tasks of preparing sole parents for entry into the workforce and minimising the state’s financial burden. It argues that JET training programs ascribe and regulate female identity and maintain the gendered subjugation of sole mothers, confirming rather than decreasing their dependence on welfare. The representation and language used to promote JET position sole mothers within a functionalist discourse of motherhood and the nuclear family. The paper explores the ramifications of such positioning for the women’s prospects for entry into full-time employment. It concludes that JET does not meet its goal of lessening the long term welfare burden of the state. Equally, policy which promotes low paid part time work, combined with partial pension, may serve to entrench the very cycle of dependence it seeks to dismantle. (Journal abstract)