



Director's report

Alan Hayes

Currently there are around 60 projects underway at the Institute varying in scale and duration. Of largest scale and longest duration are the longitudinal studies. This suite of studies reflects the capacity that the Institute has built over the years in the design, management and analysis of longitudinal research, and recognises that the dynamics of Australian society are best viewed through these “long lenses”. In addition to the other valuable data collections of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), which the Institute extensively analyses, the Australian Census Longitudinal Dataset (ACL D) provides a valuable new perspective on the lives of children, young people, adults, their families and communities. These data throw new light on pathways of change and the very large sample size of the ACL D will enable analyses of small groups that often cannot be explored in surveys, given their lesser scale. As such, it will be a vital source of information to inform policy and guide practice—and one that the Institute is already analysing in collaboration with our colleagues from the ABS. I heartily congratulate the ABS on this ground-breaking initiative.

Developments in dissemination

Since its inception, research dissemination has been a major priority for the Institute. In addition to flagship publications such as this journal, a range of reports, fact sheets and evidence briefs, in a variety of formats, are produced each year. Researchers, practitioners and policy-makers extensively draw upon these, as do the media, students and the general public, both here and abroad.

The Institute is also regularly invited to respond to a range of parliamentary inquiries. A recent example was the submission to the Senate Community Affairs References Committee Inquiry Into Grandparents Who Take Primary Responsibility for Raising Their Grandchildren. The Institute's submission, prepared by Professor Lawrie Moloney and Ms Ruth Weston PSM, provided an extensive overview of existing research that identified a

number of research gaps. The submission also included new analyses of ABS data, specifically tailored to some of the key terms of reference for the inquiry. During our appearance, we discussed methodological options to address limitations of previous research in this area—a matter we are continuing to explore. As the Research Directions for 2015–18 are prepared, issues of ageing and caring responsibilities are likely to be a prominent focus, given their policy priority.

In recent years, to coincide with Families Week, we have released a fact sheet or report. This year, however, on 21 May, the Institute published *Families, Policy and the Law: Selected Essays on Contemporary Issues for Australia*, which I co-edited with Dr Daryl Higgins. The book contains four sections that examine: “Diverse family formation: Identity, recognition and law”; “Legal and statutory responses to families in difficulty”; “Relationship breakdown and family policies and practices”; and “Social science and developments in Australian criminal and family law”. Thirty-eight authors, from within the Institute as well as from other organisations, contributed the 29 chapters.

13th AIFS conference

Every two years, the Institute's conference is a major focus for dissemination of contemporary research on a wide range of topics focused on families. With the theme “Families in a Rapidly Changing World”, the conference was held in Melbourne from 30 July to 1 August, this year. Opened by Minister for Social Services the Hon. Kevin Andrews MP, the event attracted 480 delegates from across Australia and overseas, with a program that featured more than 140 oral presentations and 34 poster presentations. The three keynote speakers who headlined the program were Mr Trevor Huddleston CBE, from the UK Department for Work and Pensions; Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott OAM, of Bracton Consulting Services; and Professor Paul Amato, from Pennsylvania State University in the USA. Each presentation was very well received and stimulated much discussion,



Keynote speakers at the AIFS Conference (top to bottom): Mr Trevor Huddleston CBE, Emeritus Professor Dorothy Scott OAM, and Professor Paul Amato



Participants at the AIFS Conference

including in the panel sessions that concluded each day's proceedings.

The event was a great success, allowing government policy-makers, service providers, practitioners and researchers to exchange ideas and share knowledge. The many messages of congratulations to the Institute on the success of the conference are wonderful recognition of the efforts of the many staff of the Institute who are the vital ingredient in delivering such an outstanding event. We also greatly appreciate the valuable support of colleagues, especially from our portfolio department, the Department of Social Services (DSS), as well as from a range of other Australian Government departments and agencies, including the Attorney General's Department (AGD) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA).

Families and Children Activity Expert Panel

The Department of Social Services (DSS) has commissioned the Institute to establish and manage a panel of experts to assist agencies funded under the Department's Families and Children Activity.

The members of the panel will be available to help build the capacity of service providers to deliver evidence-based programs and practices

and continue to build this evidence base through evaluation. The prime focus of the initiative is on strengthening prevention and early intervention approaches. Membership of the panel will be open to those with research, practice and evaluation expertise from a range of service delivery, research, training, academic and service support backgrounds. The role of the panel is to advise, mentor, support and train service providers who seek to build their capacity to offer services and programs to improve outcomes for children and families. This is particularly important for agencies that, to date, have not had access to expertise to help them achieve this. It is not intended that the work of the panel will replace or circumvent research and evaluation activities that are already being undertaken by the sector. Panel members will be contracted either directly by DSS to support the sector to deliver the government's strategic priorities for the Families and Children Activity, or directly by service providers to help them build their capacity to deliver high quality evidence-based services within their communities. A high-level steering committee will provide strategic guidance and advice on the work of the panel. The Institute will oversee the panel as part of the Child Family Community Australia information exchange <www.aifs.gov.au/cfca>.

Vale Emeritus Professor Jacqueline Jarrett Goodnow AC (1924–2014)

On 24 June, the Institute lost a true friend and enduring supporter with the passing of Jacqueline Goodnow. A foundation member of the Board of Management of the then Institute of Family Studies (IFS), Professor Goodnow served in that capacity from 1980 to 1983, contributing with the distinction that was the hallmark of each and every responsibility she undertook over a long and eminently distinguished career. Her interest in the work of the Institute continued across the years, as did her generous advice and support to Institute researchers.



Jacqueline Goodnow is remembered for the many outstanding contributions she made to the fields of social and cognitive developmental psychology. Her research was particularly focused on the influences of context on development, across the lifespan. Jacqueline's prodigious productivity continued in later life with the publication of the book *Inheriting as People Think it Should be* (Goodnow & Lawrence, 2013); a chapter on refugees and displaced people, with particular attention to unaccompanied minors (Goodnow, 2014); and, most recently, a chapter on children and culture for Volume 4 of the *Carmichael Handbook of Child Psychology*, (Goodnow & Lawrence, in press).

Emeritus Professor Goodnow's standing is attested by awards for distinguished contributions to research by the Australian Psychological Society (1988), the American Psychological Association (the G. Stanley Hall Medal, 1989), and the Society for Research in Child Development (1997). In addition to an Honorary Doctorate from Macquarie University in 1995 and Fellowships of the Australian Academy of the Social Sciences, the Australian Psychological Society, and the American Psychological Association, in 1992, Jacqueline was afforded the highest recognition of the nation with her appointment as a Companion of the Order of Australia (AC), "in recognition of service to research in child development and education in the discipline of psychology". Those of us who were privileged to work with Jacqueline Jarrett Goodnow learned that she was the quintessential developmentalist! She will be greatly missed, fondly remembered and a source of inspiration to the many whose lives she influenced for the better. The condolences of all at the Institute are extended to her family at this time of such profound loss.

Australian Gambling Research Centre

The work of the Australian Gambling Research Centre (AGRC) is primarily designed to advance understanding of the nature and extent of gambling and gambling-related harm in Australia, as well advancing ways to prevent and reduce that harm. Guided by the AGRC Research Directions for 2014–17, which have been drafted following extensive consultation, the centre is focused on undertaking research that is policy-relevant and informed by a public health approach. As such, the centre takes a population-level perspective, framed by the recognition that individual behaviour occurs in an environmental context that is strongly influenced by public policy, community attitudes, values and norms.

The AGRC has commenced an extensive work program that involves both original research and advancing inclusion of gambling questions into identified national and state-based surveys. Surveys identified for the incorporation of such questions include longitudinal research programs such as the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC), the Australian Temperament Project (ATP), and the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) survey. The inclusion of such data will serve to build links between gambling data, health and socio-economic data, and policy-relevant topics. This will then facilitate comparison of research conducted across jurisdictions, disciplines and policy areas. Consistent with the Institute's priorities in dissemination, the centre places considerable emphasis on translating and communicating gambling research to advance understanding and achieve maximum policy effect.

AIFS Research Directions 2015–18

In addition to the Institute's responsibilities with the Families and Children Activity Expert Panel, new areas of research are emerging. Over the coming months, consultations will occur to frame the Institute's own Research Directions for the next triennium, from July 2015. As with previous planning processes, the Advisory Council will be a most valuable source of advice and feedback as we frame the Institute's future research and dissemination priorities.