This has been another memorable year that has brought exciting new developments for the Institute. The most recent of these came with the official notification that AIFS has been granted accreditation as an Integrating Authority following the review of our application by the Cross Portfolio Data Integration Oversight Board. This is a major achievement and reflects the outstanding work of teams across the Institute in recent years to progressively upgrade the Institute’s data management, security and information technology capacity. I extend my heartiest congratulations to all who have contributed to this excellent achievement. It strongly positions the Institute for the future and should considerably extend the reach of our research and data analysis capabilities.

I also acknowledge the achievements of AIFS teams involved with other major initiatives. These include the further strengthening of our partnerships with the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and the Department of Defence; the repositioning of the Institute’s capacities in sexual and relational violence; and the momentum demonstrated by those responsible for positioning the Australian Gambling Research Centre (AGRC) to contribute strongly to an area of considerable family and community priority.

Australian Gambling Research Centre

Gambling is a major public policy issue in Australia, affecting the health and wellbeing of many families in a range of ways. The purpose of the AGRC is to contribute high-quality, impartial research that can inform both knowledge of the recreational role of gambling and responses to the prevention and reduction of gambling-related harm for Australians, their families and communities. As such, the AGRC conducts policy-relevant research, informed by a public health population-level approach. In conducting this research we seek to raise awareness and understanding of the potential effects of gambling, including benefits and harms, and contribute to informed debate in the community to facilitate action to prevent and reduce harm from gambling.

The AGRC recently released their research directions, which include longer term aspirational goals as well as those that can be achieved within the triennium. The research directions were developed following extensive consultation with major gambling stakeholders around Australia and internationally. The AGRC builds on the family research capacity of the Institute and, as such, is complemented by AIFS’ established expertise in research and a range of relevant disciplines.

The AGRC research directions are to:
- build understanding of the nature and extent of gambling, and gambling-related harm in Australia;
- advance knowledge of ways to prevent and reduce harm from gambling;
- perform policy-relevant research;
- strengthen gambling research capability and capacity in Australia; and
- translate and communicate gambling research.

New website

The Institute is currently in the process of re-developing our website. We launched the new Child Family Community Australia (CFCA) sub-site in September, which encompasses many of the enhancements we will see on the new AIFS website (scheduled to go live early in 2015).

The new AIFS website will be more user-focused, providing greater discoverability of our content by drawing together AIFS information on a particular topic; for example, an infographic, a fact sheet or research summary, an in-depth research report or a podcast or short video. The new website will also provide greater opportunities for showcasing our research. This will help site visitors to understand the breadth and depth of AIFS work—both past and current—and the expertise of staff in our key research areas.
The new site will also be responsive on different devices. In line with general trends, we know more people are visiting our site on a mobile device than ever before. Almost 25% of site visitors used a mobile device to access our site in the last 12 months, up from 13% in 2012. The new site will allow users to easily read and engage with our content via their device of choice, whether it’s their desktop, tablet or smartphone.

Sexual Violence Research at AIFS

Sexual Violence Research is the new name under which the Institute will continue to provide research related to sexual violence. Previously, AIFS’ research dissemination activities in this area had been delivered under the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA). The Sexual Violence Research efforts focus on two main activities: undertaking sexual violence research, and communicating related research findings and other content.

The research will examine a broad range of topics, including child sexual abuse, child and adolescent problematic sexual behaviour, adult sexual assault and perpetration and sexual offending. These topics will be explored through intersections with other social harms, such as alcohol and drug misuse, mental health issues and social disadvantage.

The Sexual Violence Research team is currently conducting research on four projects:

- **Generating Equality and Respect**—comparative analysis of models of community-based prevention of violence against women project;
- **Family Dynamics of Disclosure**—qualitative research with victim/survivors and families affected by child abuse in institutional settings;
- **Sexualisation, Media and Self-Concept**—a consultation project conducting workshops with young people; and
- **Mapping of Historical Frameworks 1950–2000**—to understand the changing context of organisations and child sexual abuse in Australian society.

Family Wellbeing Study

The Family Wellbeing Study is one of three studies comprising the Wellbeing Research Programme (WRP). This program will provide the Department of Veterans’ Affairs and the Department of Defence with robust information about the challenges faced by contemporary veterans and their families who are in the process of transitioning from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) or have already left. The three studies contributing to this program are:

- **Transition and Wellbeing Study** (AIFS involvement, University of Adelaide lead);
- **Impact of Combat Study** (no AIFS involvement, University of Adelaide lead); and
- **Family Wellbeing Study** (AIFS lead).

The Family Wellbeing Study will examine the effects of military service on the health and wellbeing of the 35,000 ADF members participating in the Transition and Wellbeing Study by focusing on the experiences and perspectives of their family members and support people (e.g., partners, parents, siblings, children).

Recent AIFS project reports

The **Vietnam Veterans Family Study: An Intergenerational Study** was published in late October. The multigenerational study examined the physical, mental and social welfare of the families of men who served in the Australian military during the Vietnam era (1965–72). It is based on a survey of Australian military personnel who, in turn, recruited members of their families (e.g., spouses, children) to take part in the survey.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs engaged AIFS to to estimate the effects of active military service on the health and wellbeing of the children of Vietnam Veterans and to identify possible mechanisms through which those effects were realised. The study found that the majority of sons and daughters born to Vietnam veterans are leading healthy and productive lives. However, analysis found that the families of Australia’s Vietnam veterans are more likely to have considerable emotional, physical and social issues when compared to families of those who served in that era but did not deploy to Vietnam.

The **Stronger Families in Australia (SFIA) Study (Phase Two)** report was published in September 2014 and presents a medium-to long-term evaluation of the Australian Government Communities for Children (CfC) initiative. CfC aims to improve services for young children and their families and the communities in which they grow up. The longitudinal evaluation looked at the effects of CfC on child, family and community outcomes. Over the five waves of SFIA, the vast majority of findings indicated that the wellbeing of children and parents in CfC communities was better than in comparison communities, even if these differences did not reach statistical significance.
Very few studies of early intervention services follow children for six years and provide the depth of information that SFIA has been able to deliver.

The Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Review and Evaluation has also recently been published. This study consisted of three related research projects commissioned and funded by Women NSW (Department of Family and Community Services), two of which were conducted by AIFS.

The first AIFS project concerned evaluating prevention and early intervention services that target groups and communities known to be at higher risk of experiencing domestic and family violence, or who face barriers in accessing existing services. These groups include: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; women with disabilities; women in culturally and linguistically diverse communities; people who are same-sex attracted, intersex, or sex- or gender-diverse; younger women; and women in remote communities.

The second AIFS project focused on evaluating prevention, early intervention and response services that target children who are affected by domestic and family violence. The research centered on children aged 0–8 years, and identified what services are needed by children who are affected by domestic and family violence, what is being done to support them, what models of service delivery are most effective, and what the gaps in services are. The aim of the study was to improve the evidence base to help curb intergenerational violence. See <www.aifs.gov.au/vpr>.

The year ahead

The Institute is very well positioned to embrace exciting prospects for 2015, and beyond. This year, in addition to the developments outlined above, we have strengthened existing strategic relationships and developed new ones, and have taken significant steps to further extend our capabilities and reach. In short, another very busy year has framed the foundations for a vibrant future!

On behalf of all at AIFS, I extend our thanks for your continuing support and recognition of the value of our contributions in research, evaluation and dissemination.

With warmest best wishes to you and your families for the festive season and the year to come.

Vale Sister Dr Carol Hogan
(1931–2014)

Sadly, Sister Dr Carol Hogan SSS, a great friend of the Institute and longstanding member of the Institute’s Human Research Ethics Committee, died on Monday, 2 June 2014 at Mary McKillop Aged Care in Hawthorn, Melbourne. Her assistance in ensuring that our research met strong ethical standards was of enormous benefit to AIFS and is but one reflection of the diverse ways in which she dedicated her life to social justice issues.

Sister Carol joined the AIFS Ethics Committee in January 1996 and resigned in November 2013 when her illness took hold. Her last few months were lived with the same dignity, compassion for others, and strength of spirit that epitomised her entire life.

For 24 years (1978–2002), she worked as a Chaplain at the University of Melbourne, supporting students of all faiths. In this capacity, she helped establish (in 1987) the Catholic Overseas Students Down Under (COSDU) at the University of Melbourne to bring together international students enrolled in Melbourne tertiary institutions, assisting them to engender mutual support, spiritual enrichment and a sense of community. Under her leadership, COSDU also developed a social justice ministry entailing various volunteering activities within the wider community. Sister Carol resigned from her position in order to work full-time on achieving her PhD.

Sister Carol was a Blessed Sacrament Sister whose passion for social justice issues included a strong commitment to feminist theology. She was National Secretary of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)—an organisation dedicated to raising community awareness of slavery and human trafficking, facilitating action to combat and prevent such activities, and providing a range of services to victims.

While Sister Carol is sorely missed, her work will live on. The condolences of all at the Institute are extended to her family, friends and colleagues.