

WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2007

CALL FOR A NEW AGENDA FOR FAMILY WELLBEING

The peak body for families is calling for the establishment of an independent Australian Families Commission to advise on priority issues affecting the wellbeing of family life in Australia.

The new body is part of a three-pronged agenda to be launched today by Families Australia head Mr Brian Babington at the National Family Wellbeing Symposium, co-hosted by The Australian National University.

"There's no widely accepted framework which focuses specifically on family and there's less than sufficient coordination between governments of resources and support for family; these are issues that the National Family Wellbeing Agenda seeks to address," Mr Babington said.

The three initiatives of the National Family Wellbeing Agenda are:

- **A National Family Wellbeing Framework** - prepared by a taskforce from the government, business and community sectors, and families.
- **A National Family Wellbeing Action Strategy** - based on the Framework and advised by an independent body such as an Australian Families Commission. A 'National State of the Family Report' should be prepared triennially to report on progress in meeting goals.
- **Top priorities for a National Family Wellbeing Action Strategy** - early childhood and support for families that face severe or multiple disadvantages; a national approach to child protection; and closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous families and children.

International guests to address the symposium include Dr Willem Adema, from the Organization for Economic and Co-operation and Development in Paris, who is overseeing the development of a new cross-national, online database, the *OECD Family Database*. The Chief of Monitoring Social Economic Policies at the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Dr Eva Jespersen, will examine the place of family wellbeing in research, social and economic policy.

The symposium is examining the latest Australian and international research on family wellbeing and identifying current and emerging influences on the family. It aims to identify areas for further policy development and research.

Media are welcome to attend the symposium. A number of presenters are available for interview.

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