



# Newsletter

DECEMBER 2005

Season's Greetings to all our study children and their families! It has been another busy year for *Growing Up in Australia*. We have been working towards the start of the second round of interviews, making sure we will be asking questions that are relevant to the progress your child has been making since we first interviewed you.

For some families, the second round of interviews has already started, but most of you will be contacted during March to September next year. We are really looking forward to hearing how everything is going for you and your child.

Experienced interviewers from the Australian Bureau of Statistics are undertaking the second round of visits. These interviewers are already telling us how much they are enjoying this study and meeting all the families.

Thanks to everyone who sent back (or completed online) the questionnaire we mailed out to you earlier this year, or late last year. This has given us a valuable update before we visit you again. Information from this questionnaire will be available next year.

One of our biggest challenges is keeping in touch with the thousands of you who move each year. We really appreciate that many of you ring 1800 005 508 or send the change of address form. At the back of the 2006 *Growing Up in Australia* calendar is a pre-paid change of address card. Please pop this in the post, with your updated details, if you move during the year.

As always, thank you for continuing to be part of this very important study. Only through your continued support can we obtain the best possible information to be of benefit to all Australian children.

Best wishes

Professor Alan Hayes  
Director, Australian Institute of Family Studies



## The longitudinal study of Australian children

Initiated and funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services

### Growing Up in Australia

is housed at the Australian Institute of Family Studies  
300 Queen Street, Melbourne  
Victoria 3000

Phone: (03) 9214 7888

Fax: (03) 9214 7839

Email: [growingup@aifs.gov.au](mailto:growingup@aifs.gov.au)

Internet: [www.aifs.gov.au/growingup](http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup)

## STOP PRESS

We are very excited to announce that a documentary is being made about *Growing Up in Australia*, which we hope will be screened on television later next year. **Families featured in the documentary have been recruited separately to the main study.** These families have been chosen to reflect the diversity of families in the study. Watch out for the publicity later next year. If you have any queries about this documentary, please email [growingup@aifs.gov.au](mailto:growingup@aifs.gov.au) or phone the Institute on 03 9214 7888.



**Australian Government**  
Australian Institute of  
Family Studies

*Growing Up in Australia* is the longitudinal study of Australian children. It aims to provide the database for a comprehensive understanding of children's development in Australia's current social, economic and cultural environment, and to become a major evidence base for future policy and practice regarding children and their families.

*Growing Up in Australia* will follow representative samples of 5,000 infants and 5,000 four to five year-olds and their families until 2010 and possibly beyond.

*Growing Up in Australia* was initiated and funded by the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services.

You can visit the *Growing Up in Australia* website at any time to get the latest information on the study. Every three months we produce a general newsletter for the website with updates on the study's progress.

[www.aifs.gov.au/growingup](http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup)



The longitudinal study of  
Australian children

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## Information from the study

The next edition of *Family Matters*, the journal of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, is dedicated to *Growing Up in Australia*. This issue contains articles based on analysis of the first round of interviews. Topics include childhood injuries in different types of family, neighbourhood influences on children's wellbeing, work-family balance, child care, the role of grandparents in children's lives, and children's temperament and adjustment.



Highlights from the paper on the role of grandparents in children's lives are:

- About three-quarters of children see their grandparents at least every month. Children with a parent who does not live with them all the time were more likely to see a grandparent daily, however they were also slightly more likely to have no face-to-face contact with any grandparent.
- Almost one in five children were regularly looked after by their grandparents. This generally happened on either one or two days per week, but occasionally involved care on up to 7 days per week. Infants were more likely than 4-5 year olds to have this care in their own home.
- Less than 10 per cent of grandparents caring for children were paid for looking after the children. Parents reported greater satisfaction with grandparents looking after children than with staff in day care centres undertaking this task.

In addition to work being undertaken by the Institute, there are over 60 researchers from government and other agencies who have been granted access to the confidentialised information from *Growing Up in Australia* to investigate issues such as:

- Parenting practices and styles in Australian families
- Work and family balance
- Effect of child care experiences on children's development, and
- Relationship between activity patterns, asthma, obesity and quality of life.

## The mail-out questionnaire

We are just starting to look at the information from the mail-out questionnaire. In particular, the Department of Family and Community Services is intending to analyse the comments on what you like most about your child. We are delighted with the responses you have given and should have some interesting things to report once the analysis is completed.

Parents of the infant cohort also provided information on their working arrangements and leave before and after the birth of their child. This information is being used by Dr Gillian Whitehouse and her colleagues at the University of Queensland and University of Sydney to map the use of parental leave and family friendly work policies in Australia. Here are some words from Gillian:

*Thank you to all the infants' parents who responded to the mail-out survey and provided us with information about their working experiences before and after their baby's birth. This is the first time comprehensive information has been collected on the use of parental leave and parents' return to work experiences in Australia. It's crucial information for policy makers and researchers so we're really grateful for your help.*

*The first figures from the survey indicate that around 70 per cent of mothers were working in the 12 months prior to the birth of their child, and that around 34 per cent of these working mothers took some paid maternity leave. A smaller proportion (around 20 per cent) of working fathers took some paid paternity leave. However lots of other forms of leave were used by families at the time of the birth of a child, and we're using the information you've provided to analyse the benefits and limitations of different sorts of policies. We'll keep you updated on the results!*

## The next phase

As mentioned earlier, some families have already had their second interview. If you haven't heard from us yet, you will be contacted during March to September next year. Just prior to the time for your interview we will send you a letter outlining what is involved in the second phase of the study, and then an interviewer from the Australian Bureau of Statistics will contact you to arrange a suitable time to visit. **It will really help if we have a current telephone number for you** (please ring 1800 005 508 to update your details).

The interview will take about one to two hours to complete and, similar to last time, will involve:

- asking questions of the parent who knows most about your child;
- asking this parent to fill in a short questionnaire;
- taking height, weight and tummy measurements of your child;
- for children in the older cohort, doing some activities with your child, similar to the ones we did last time, and asking your child a few questions about how they like school and how they feel in general; and
- leaving questionnaires and the Time Use Diaries for the parent(s) to complete.

## Views of parents living at other addresses

Children live in a variety of family situations, and we know that the parents of some of the children in the study do not live together. To fully understand children's development it is very important to have information from both parents (as well as step-parents).

If your child has a parent living at another address, we would like to make contact with this parent and ask him or her to fill in a short questionnaire. The interviewer will have a copy of this form to show you. If you are in this situation, we would greatly appreciate your help with this part of the study.

## Your privacy – what happens to the information?

Your privacy is important to us and only the combined results from everyone in the study will be discussed and published. Any information you provide will remain absolutely confidential – no names, addresses or other identifiable information are given to researchers, and the information will never be used in any way that identifies you, your child or your family. Strict procedures are followed to ensure that only authorised people have access to your information, and all the interviewers and researchers involved must comply with the Privacy Act 1988.

## Some of the people behind the study



There have been some changes in the people involved with *Growing Up in Australia*. Dr Matthew Gray (pictured), who joined the Institute as Deputy Director Research in July, is now the Executive Project Manager for the study. A number of changes have also occurred in the Project Operations Team (POT).

In addition, staff from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) have joined the *Growing Up in Australia* study. Pictured below are some of the POT and ABS staff at a meeting earlier this year.



Left to right: POT - Carol Soloff, Joanne Slater, Emma White, Robert Johnstone, Linda Bencic, Sebastian Misson, Anna Ferro; ABS – Sue Doyle, Joanne Corey, Tony Grubb, David Zago, Gill McPadden

There has also been a change in staff at the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Studies. Pictured below is the current team.



Left to right: Peter Walkear, Margaret Wada, Andrew Whitecross, Matuna Mostafa, Sue Sutton

## Your help is really appreciated

This study rests on your support! The questions we ask in this study are vital for understanding the issues affecting children growing up in Australia. We try to ask interesting questions and make taking part in the study an enjoyable experience for you and your child. We sincerely hope you will continue to be part of this unique and important study, and please keep in touch by updating your details if they change.

**Further information: phone 1800 005 508, or visit [www.aifs.gov.au/growingup](http://www.aifs.gov.au/growingup)**

***Growing Up in Australia:***

**helping to make sure all children have a good start in life**