The Family Challenge

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ISSUES	PRINCIPLES	CHALLENGES
CARING	Families are first and foremost about love – caring about and caring for our kin and chosen others – serving personal, emotional and physical needs.	How can we encourage and nurture satisfactory relationships, a sense of mutual responsibility and care, the valuing of shared family life?
CHILDREN	Children, their physical, cognitive and emotional growth, are central to family life.	How to ensure optimal conditions for every child to grow in health and mind to their full potential?
PARENTS	Parenting, and the social supports for parents, must come centre stage, because parents cannot do it all alone.	How to mobilise other community resources to enhance the life chances of every child and help parents in their key task of raising children?
VALUES	Families as the key transmitters of cultural values to children, the key models for (un)acceptable behaviour, also need support from surrounding social systems for those basic human values of respect, tolerance, acceptance of diversity, equity, service, responsibility for others, trust, honesty, decency, cooperation.	How can the multicultural and religious diversity of family life help nurture universal basic human values, and how can they be extended via education, media and other social institutions?
PARTNERSHIPS	Partners in parenting include spouses, other relatives, teachers, infant health nurses, GPs, child carers, teachers, employers and the quality of the neighbouring community.	How to share the parenting task while staying close to the child and its needs? How to create a 'child-friendly' community, other organisations, settings, media etc. that are obviously accepting of and of value to children's development?
WORK CULTURE	The greatest blockage to parents and those who care for others (aged, disabled) is 'work' – both access to a job and its income as a prerequisite to caring, and the nature of work and its effects on time and energy available to be a good carer of others.	How to encourage a 'family-friendly' work culture and more family-responsive work practices that will help both productivity and caring goals?
GENDER EQUALITY	Most job structures are based on the assumptions that the employee is male, he has a 'homemaker' to do all else, private family life is irrelevant to work and performance, one wage is enough for a family, and that the job comes first (cf.'we work in order to live, not the other way round').	How to develop more flexible job structures that permit and encourage equality and choice for both men and women in the way they combine earning a living and caring for others in family and community? How to provide work for all who want it?
FAMILY SUPPORT	Families do not and cannot do their work of nurturance as a privatised unit. They need support from the rest of the society and cannot 'live alone'.	How to 're-surround' families with systems that are 'family-friendly', support services and access to wider resources that will assist them in their central tasks of caring without being denigrated as 'dependent on welfare'? How to build on the strengths of families in a civil society that works in partnership with individual family units?
INTER-GENERATIONAL NETWORKS	The greatest strengths of families lies in their mutual support for one another, across ages and geographical distances. But these extended family links can sometimes be missing and can lock families into the 'inheritance' or transmission of disadvantage.	How to develop new inter-generational networks that stimulate mutual respect and support between the young, the old, adults and youth rather than locking them into age-segregated or isolated family networks?
DISADVANTAGED FAMILIES– FAMILIES IN TROUBLE	There is no doubt that some groups of families are disadvantaged – the unemployed, low paid, single-parent, single-income, Aboriginal, remote, rural.	How to extend the 'safety net' for disadvantaged families, ensure equal access to jobs, income, health, housing, education, support services to ensure no family lacks the accepted living standards of Australian society? How to ensure greater consistency across policy and program areas directed at disadvantaged families?
FAMILIES IN CONFLICT	There is also no doubt that many families, for various reasons, suffer disruption, conflict and dissolution.	How to provide intensive family support at times of crisis that will help preserve family stability or at least reduce the damaging impact of conflict and disruption?
FAMILY ABUSE AND VIOLENCE	The worst end of family dysfunction involves abuse and violence, especially against women and children.	How to prevent and protect against family abuse and violence? How to define the limits of family 'autonomy'? How to change values and attitudes that condone violence and abuse?
FAMILY AND THE LAW	The law serves as both a codification of community values about family life and as a context in which family change occurs.	How to ensure the law recognises the rights of families and their members, while ensuring responsibilities are met and entitlements are honoured?
FAMILY POLICY	Families are central to the economic development of society and to the quality of our social fabric. This needs to be recognised consistently in every aspect of policy.	To develop an acceptable national agenda for Australian families, one which is a guide to action rather than merely an expression of good policy intentions.