



## **An opening Statement to Budget Estimates 2022-2023**

Community Affairs Legislative Committee  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> of November, Weds 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 2022.  
The Australian Institute of Family Studies  
Dr Sharman Stone, Director

The Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) was established under the Family Law Act 1975. Its purpose is to research the factors affecting Australian family wellbeing and to disseminate the findings to both inform policy and to improve practice in the delivery of government funded family services. This includes their evaluation. The Gambling Measures Act 2012 added the Australian Gambling Research Centre to AIFS responsibilities.

### **Staffing**

AIFS has an average staffing level of some 81 staff, some 67 are researchers. 75% women and 25% men. We are based at Southbank, Melbourne.

### **Finances**

In the 2021/22 financial year AIFS received a \$4,469,000 government appropriation and raised another \$10,966,000 through contracted research for a range of government departments, in particular the Department of Social Services, Department of Health, Attorney-General's Department, Department of Veterans' Affairs and Department of Defence. The Appropriations of some \$4.5 m has not increased in more than 20 years, making it necessary for us to pursue other relevant government research contracts, in order that we fulfil our legislated mandate, employing a multi skilled and expert research workforce.

### **Our Work**

We are one of the seven accredited Data Linkage integrating authorities. This means we can link individual data in a survey, say on the prevalence of mental health issues during a natural disaster, with Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, Medicare or other administrative data. This capability provides powerful new insights into prevalence and new causal links.

AIFS is well known here and internationally for our longitudinal studies. Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children, is now 20 years old and involves 10,000 young people and their families. Research findings over the years have informed policy in various areas including the first paid parental leave scheme and universal access to early childhood education.

The 10 year Building a New Life in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Humanitarian Migrants has revealed much about the preconditions for new settler employment, housing, English

language learning and health. It explores, for example, why after five years some 70% of the working age settlers remain unemployed.

The AIFS 10 year Longitudinal Study of Male Health, called Ten to Men has the world's biggest sample for such a study. Among the important findings are links between school outcomes, suicide and substance abuse.

The Family Law, Family Violence and Elder Abuse research program has informed policy development to improve the family law system response to safety issues for children and adults. It also produced the seminal National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study in 2021, which demonstrated that 15% of community dwelling Australians reported experiencing in elder abuse in the preceding twelve months.

Our Australian Gambling Research Centre utilises our longitudinal data sets and a range of mixed methods studies to assess gambling trends and harms. For example, analysis of the Growing up in Australia survey data sets showed the links between certain types of video game playing by adolescents, their parent's behaviour and their gambling as an adult. The 10 to Men study showed more than four in ten men engaged in gambling. Of these, 1 in 4 male gamblers (three quarters of a million) were at risk of or already experiencing gambling problems in the past year.

Our Defence and Veteran Family Research has given evidence to inform the Royal Commission into Veteran Suicides. Other recent research has identified the family influence on remaining or retirement from the forces.

While we are committed to providing new evidence to inform government policy and to evaluate it, we are equally committed to providing this evidence as best practice advice to individuals and the government funded providers of family support and services. Our Child and Family Evidence and Evaluation program produces webinars, fact sheets, e-News on a wide range of topics from mental health support for children and families, to family law parenting orders. These are free to access. Our performance measures for this work show it is highly valued.

We are happy to take your questions now or provide any other information on notice that we may not be able to supply to you today.



**Dr Sharman Stone**

**Director**