

## **STRONGER FAMILIES, STRONGER COMMUNITIES: NATIONAL FAMILIES WEEK 2017**

Notes for address by Dr Brian Babington, Chief Executive Officer, Families Australia  
At the Department of Social Services, Canberra, 17 May 2017

Thank you very much for the invitation to say a few words this morning as part of National Families Week. It's always a pleasure to be with so many colleagues from the Department.

Earlier this week we held a highly successful Child Aware Approaches Conference in Brisbane. Many thanks to the Department for supporting this conference which drew 330 people from policymaking, service delivery and research spheres from around Australia to discuss ways to improve child safety and wellbeing.

Over coming days over 120,000 people will participate in many hundreds of National Families Week events around Australia to celebrate the vital role that families play in our lives.

Families Australia has been privileged to convene National Families Week each year for the past 14 years. National Families Week celebrates the centrality of families in our lives. The diversity of events mirrors the diversity of families in Australia today.

I think of National Families Week as a time to encourage all Australians to reflect on what family means to them; to consider the great strengths and variety of families, the many challenges they face, and the importance of seeking help when it's needed.

Families take many forms, but all are the same in needing nourishment. Whatever form they take, families are our most time-honoured settings for receiving, giving and nurturing love, understanding and support.

With this important idea of recognising and honouring diversity in mind, I join with you today in marking the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT) as it raises awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex rights violations and promotes interest in LGBTIQ rights work worldwide.

Colleagues, our collective commitment and work to improve the wellbeing of families, whatever form they take, remains as challenging as ever. It requires constant expansion of collaboration between players across governments, the non-government world, the business community, research and civil society.

Families Australia works hard at what I call 'expanding the collaborative space' to get the widest range of interests engaged in policy thinking. I know that this is also a fundamentally important driver for the Department, and I close by thanking you for your work to support better futures for families and children.