

192

The Convenor,
Royal Commission,
into Family Violence,
PO. Box 535,
Flinders Lane,
VIC 8009

19/5/15

Dear Sir/Madam
Re: Royal Commission into Family Violence 2015

I thank you for the opportunity to put
in a submission to the Victorian Inquiry

I am a member of Australian Family
Association which includes National Care
Council. I have been a submitter to over
~~twenty~~ inquiries through from 1991 onwards
These have been Commonwealth and State
parliamentary inquiries into family issues

I will keep my submission brief
and point you to some attached documents
to articulate the issue

I will state this however:
(1) Since 1975 no fault divorce has
created havoc in families in Australia
(2) Since about 1982 the de facto
legislation has made the situation
worse and unmanageable

The short sighted legalism and
policies originating in the USA and UK
in the 1970s have been borrowed here.
The abrogation of responsibility and
moral uprightness has made the

2 of 2

situation in male/female relations uncontrollable in significant areas of our culture. For example 30000 intervention orders a year in Victoria is absurd. Similar figures regarding so called child abuse and other areas, the same.

We need to continue to persevere positive human policies of fairness and justice

The popular press tend to use sensationalism, mis-editing and bias to propagate untruth

Responsible management, legal reform, ~~team~~ spirit and Australian ethic of a few go an areas to focus on in the long term

The system of family law has significant areas of unfairness hostility and violence in areas of relationships. It needs to be continually looked at and reformed
yours faithfully
Brian Clarke

Attachments:

- (1) Herald Sun article 22/4/15
- (2) Catholic Social Justice Council (10 steps to ^{8 steps to} Family)
- (3) Kevin Andrews MP (AFA Bulletin) 2014
- (4) Emotional Intelligence News Week (July 2014)

SCHOOLS

ATTACHMENT No 4

Preventing bullying with emotional intelligence

by Marc Brackett and Susan Rivers

In school, emotions matter. Not only do children with anxiety and aggression have difficulty focusing and learning, they also tend to be victims or perpetrators of bullying. Whether it's old-fashioned physical or verbal aggression, ostracism or online abuse, bullying is deeply rooted in a lack of emotional intelligence skills. These skills can and should be taught, though they seldom are.

What children need is a curriculum in emotional intelligence skills. These include the ability to recognise emotions in the self and in others; understand the causes of emotions and their consequences for thinking and behaviour; label emotions with a sophisticated vocabulary; express emotions in socially appropriate ways; and regulate emotions effectively.

Emotionally intelligent people of all ages recognise a healthy range of emotions in themselves and others — insight that helps them to form stable, supportive relationships and enjoy greater well-being and academic or job performance.

Emotional intelligence protects people from depression, anxiety and aggression, and equips them to face bullying by managing their own fear and reaching out for help. By contrast, a lack of emotional intelligence predicts aggression, substance abuse and worse mental health.

Teaching emotional intelligence, while quite feasible, isn't as simple as adding a subject to the schedule. On the contrary, a successful emotional curriculum takes a whole-school approach. It begins by educating teachers, administrators and parents, for many of whom these skills will be new. Only after that are the concepts introduced to students.

In the United States, some 500 schools have introduced an evidence-based program called RULER, designed to teach the skills for Recognising, Understanding, Labelling, Expressing and Regulating emotions.

RULER uses four anchors of emotional intelligence, upon which a flexible emotional intelligence curriculum is built. Students and teachers write collaborative Charters detailing the behaviours they expect from one another. They learn to locate feelings on a Mood Meter and gain a rich vocabulary to describe those feelings. They are taught to take a Meta-Moment — a short pause — before reacting to provocation. And they devise a Blueprint to address problem behaviours that do arise.

The results of RULER training are strikingly positive. In RULER schools, focus and classroom climate improve. Students and teachers form better relationships, and teachers suffer less burnout. Children are less anxious and depressed and do better academically, as well as showing greater social skills and fewer behavioural problems. Suspensions can fall by as much as 60 per cent. And bullying decreases.

In the U.S., a federal bill is under consideration that would support adding social-emotional learning to teacher-training programs.

A system-wide, evidence-based education in emotional intelligence is every bit as important as an education in traditional subjects. By contrast, failing to offer children these crucial skills creates a fertile environment for bullying. Australia's children deserve an emotional education, one that gives them every chance to become more effective learners and happier, more self-aware and more compassionate human beings.

That's what Victoria's Girton Grammar School in Bendigo did in 2011. It sent teachers to the U.S. to be trained in RULER, subsequently becoming the country's first to adopt the program.

Melbourne's King David School and a handful of other Victorian and NSW schools have adopted the program as well. KidsMatter Primary is a Depart-

ment of Health-funded social and emotional learning program built on similar principles; the schools it has reached include those in disadvantaged areas, such as Coolaroo South Primary School in northern Victoria — places where, arguably, children may benefit even further from an understanding of emotion.

^{S.Y.M.P.O.M.S} Bullying is a major problem in Australia. The Australian Covert Bullying Prevalence study found that over one in four children in Years 4 to 9 reported being bullied at least every few weeks, with hurtful teasing and lies the most common behaviours. In 2008, a tenth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children between the ages of 4 and 14 reported being bullied in school about their Indigenous origins.

Bullying victims suffer higher rates of depression, anxiety, social withdrawal and suicidal thoughts. They also do worse academically. Perpetrators suffer, too, experiencing more depression, anxiety, hostility and substance abuse. Even children who are bystanders may be traumatised. Worst off are bully-victims — children who are both bullying victims and bullies in their own right. As adults, this group often go on to criminal behaviour and partner abuse.

The United States has made many well-meaning attempts to legislate bullying out of existence, introducing measures like zero-tolerance policies, close monitoring and awareness assemblies. But bullying rates haven't dropped. Such law-and-order approaches can even backfire when children taught to stand up to bullies face retaliation.

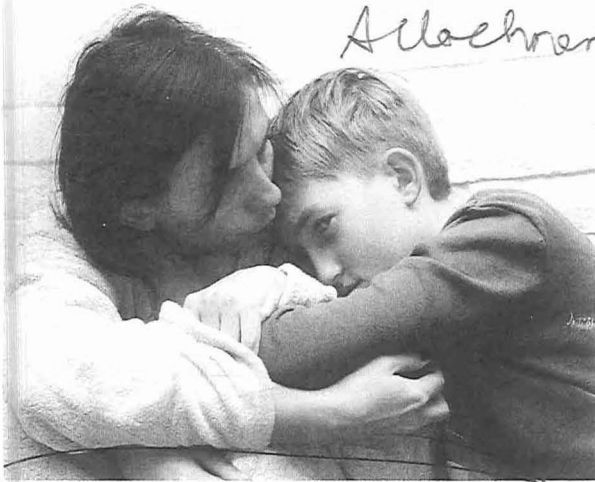
^{S.Y.M.P.O.M.S} The programs fail because get-tough strategies neglect to address the reasons children bully: namely, a lack of emotional understanding and an inability to self-regulate powerful emotions. Children who don't know what to do with emotions like frustration, fear or isolation may turn to bullying for emotional release. If we teach our children to be emotionally intelligent, they'll learn how to recognise these emotions and transform them into something more positive.

Marc A. Brackett, PhD, and Susan E. Rivers, PhD, are director and deputy director respectively of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. The above article first appeared in the Australian journal, *The Conversation*, and is reproduced with permission.

NW

good work
into the head
lead

emotional skills
NEWS WEEKLY, JULY 19, 2014 PAGE 7
what's coming



Attachment No 2

8. Who are the Indigenous people in your area?

Every part of Australia was/is part of an Aboriginal nation. See www.aiatsis.gov.au/asp/map.html or www.abc.net.au/indigenous/map/

Who are the Aboriginal people in your area?

If there are none there now, what happened to those who used to live there?

What Indigenous language is or was spoken in your area?

What Indigenous cultural activities happen in your area: art, dance, music, literature? Attend a local event as a family. Read books written by Aboriginal authors.

Watch a film about Indigenous Australians, for example *Rabbit Proof Fence*, *Ten Canoes*, *The Tracker*, *The Sapphires*.

9. Asylum seekers and refugees

Get the facts on refugees and asylum seekers. Visit the websites of Australian Catholic Migration and Refugee Office (www.acmro.catholic.org.au), Refugee Council of Australia (www.refugeecouncil.org.au) or Jesuit Refugee Service (www.jrs.org.au).

Many families came to Australia as refugees. Is your family an example? Is someone in your neighbourhood? Where have they come from?

Reach out to refugees in your area, by visiting them, inviting them to your place, helping them to get to know the local area.

Read stories written by refugees such as *The Happiest Refugee*, by Anh Do.

10. Assist and support people with a disability

Are there people with a disability in your parish? What is in place to support them, like assistance with transport to Church activities? Give your time so carers can have some time off. What Disability Support Services are in your area? Visit them to see if you can assist by volunteering in some way. Access the resource kit *One Body in Christ: Welcoming people with a disability*, produced by the Australian Catholic Disability Council (02 6201 9850).

Ten steps to strengthen and support families

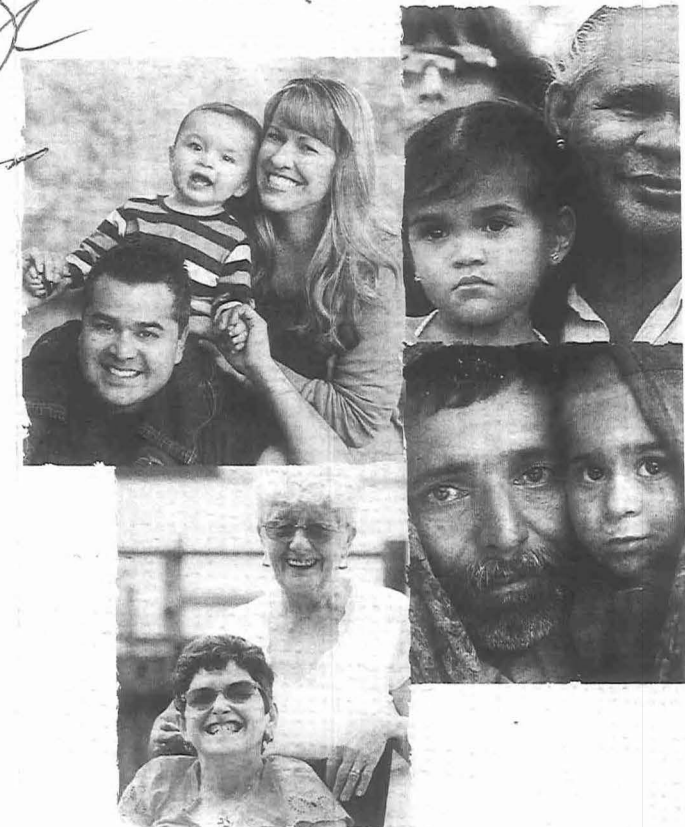
7. Concern for vulnerable and families living in poverty

God's gifts are fully realised when they are shared with others. How we receive and use those gifts will be ultimately judged by how we treat our neighbours – particularly those who are most in need. (Statement p.7)

Who are the vulnerable families in your parish, town or suburb? How are they supported in your parish?

Offer your help through community or parish groups such as St Vincent de Paul Society. Use your skills for projects such as <http://kmit4charities.webs.com/>

Go through your cupboards and take the clothes, toys, appliances you don't need to Vinnies or another charity. Stretch yourself and include one or two things you think you do need.



Australian Catholic Social Justice Council
24-32 O'Riordan St, Alexandria NSW 2015
Tel: (02) 8306 3499 • Fax: (02) 8306 3498
Email: admin@acsjc.org.au
www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au

Herald Sun 22/4/20

of violence

Caption

HOME TRUTH OF VIOLENCE

Sub editor

Be vigilant, top cop advises

Journalist

ELISSA DOHERTY

DON'T turn a blind eye. Don't stay silent. If you suspect family violence involving a stranger or a neighbour, or a friend or relative, tell police.

That's the message from Assistant Commissioner Dean McWhirter, head of Victoria Police's Family Violence Command — the first in Australia.

"The challenge for us all is to not be a passive bystander," Mr McWhirter said.

"It's not the responsibility of the neighbours or the person walking down the street to determine what's going on.

"It's an opportunity for them to contact us and let us make a decision about what's going on.

"My advice is if they have concerns they should ring, and let us make a judgment call."

Mr McWhirter, just three weeks into his new role, said the rise in reports of domestic abuse posed a major challenge.

While the growing public awareness and a greater police focus was a good thing, reports would only increase further with the beginning of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, creating a huge workload for frontline police.

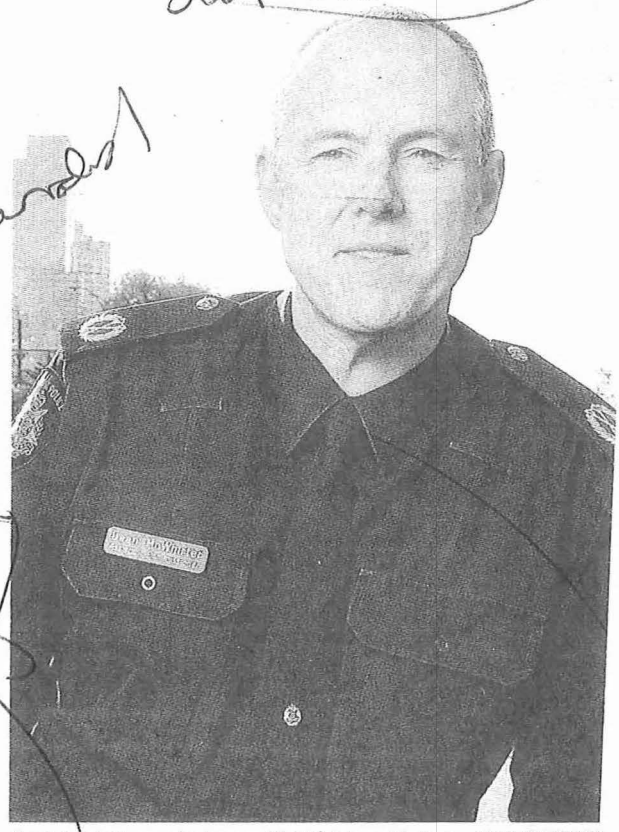
His challenge was to try to streamline the police response, reducing pressure on officers while ensuring victims' safety.

One focus for his new command would be the nearly 44,000 Victorian children who last year saw their parents or relatives assaulting each other.

This figure was almost double that of four years ago.

Mr McWhirter said the short- to long-term consequences for these children was of significant concern.

"Whether it manifests as challenges for them personally, or in terms of future relationships, that's a really, really challenging thing," he



Assistant Commissioner McWhirter. Picture: TIM CARRAI

The challenge for us all is to not be a passive bystander

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER DEAN MCWHIRTER

said. The incidence of family violence perpetrated by the young had also shot up.

There were 7682 cases last year in which the abuser was aged 10 to 19, up from 4769 in 2010.

Figures revealed in the past four years 193 perpetrators were aged just 10.

Mr McWhirter said this created particular problems, owing to a lack of emergency accommodation and pressure on support services.

"There seems to be a huge gap in terms of the capacity to support them," he said.

"The service sector is under great strain. Young children in the home ... may be offending in a range of ways, but trying to get them out of that environment is really problematic and puts a strain on members."

Mr McWhirter said parties would include better catering police in dealing victims, risk assessments, tinging male perpetrators behavioural change program earlier, and better co-ordination with other agencies.

He said the unit's 26 would expand to about 50 year, including policy specialists, intelligence gatherers a small investigative team

"For me it's about ensuring we all have an appreciation of what family violence means," Mr McWhirter said.

"It's not just a number the 68,000 reports last year."

"It's the 20-plus honours that emanate from family violence, it's the 7000 serious injuries that occur, it's the children sexually abused."

"That's the story: the Police attend an incident eight minutes."

The unit, which also deals with sexual assault and domestic violence, will take advice from police, health, justice agencies and domestic violence bodies at a two-day forum in the coming months.
 elissa.doherty@news.com.au
 Twitter: @ElissaDoherty

Attachment No 1

last Apr.

at the ... town ... Rd.

ad in the ... Mass at

inations may Calvary Care ... will be ... Church.

IN BROTHERS ... ERN 9576 0433lobinbrothers.com.au

E01 015

abortions in an “emergency” where abortion is deemed “necessary” to preserve the life of the pregnant woman. This provision has been used to deem abortion “necessary” where a pregnant woman is threatening to commit suicide. One wonders why doctors and nurses are forced against their conscience to accept abortion is the appropriate treatment for a suicidal woman. Section 8 denies the right to freedom of conscience for health professionals, a right guaranteed by international human rights instruments.

The articles in this issue touch on some of the most urgent areas where there is much work to be done to preserve fundamental human freedoms and human dignity. If you are reading this editorial you are most probably a member or supporter of the Australian Family Association. So you are doing your bit to assist this work. Encouraging family, friends, colleagues to also subscribe would spread the message.

Wishing you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas and every best wish for the New Year, 2014.

A National Family Policy Proposal*

by Kevin Andrews

ATTACHMENT No 3

**This is an edited extract from Mr Andrews' book, Maybe 'I do' – Modern Marriage and the Pursuit of Happiness (Ballan: Connor Court, 2012). First published in the summer edition of The Family in America http://familyinamerica.org/index.php?doc_id=59&cat_id=22*

Two principles recognize and support the existence of key mediating or bridging structures in society, such as families and voluntary associations. First, public policy should protect and foster marriage and family; and, secondly, wherever possible, public policy should utilize the family and community organizations, rather than displacing them. These principles arise from a belief that public policy and social programs should support civil society, and that the institutions of civil society, primarily the family, have priority over the political.

This is opposed to the view that family policy is what government does to and for families. The institutions of civil society—including the family and charitable, religious, and service agencies—are important precisely because they are neither created nor controlled by the State.

A blending of the role of government

and the civil sector risks the domination of the government sphere over all others, because when the State directs the activity of civil society, it enfeebles citizens' ability to take responsibility for their own community and society. The practical outcome is all too familiar: a one-size-fits-all approach to social problems, ensnared by contractual obligations with service agencies, designed to fit governmental pigeon holes, which rob much of the individual initiative that should motivate charity. Worse, this approach endangers the vibrancy of institutions that help to form virtuous citizens. The act of giving—whether finances, services or counsel—becomes a professional activity and function of the State, rather than an act of charity and love directed to fellow human beings.

To support the family, four policy goals are proposed:

1. Nations should have an explicit marriage and family policy.
2. They should seek to maintain at least a replacement birthrate.
3. National policy should proclaim the ideal of marital permanence and affirm marriage

as the optimal environment for the raising of children.

4. The policy should value family stability and reinforce personal and intergenerational responsibility.

A Family Policy

Despite political rhetoric, few nations have a national family policy. Families are treated as welfare recipients, or the aged, or defence-force personnel, or public housing occupants, or taxpayers—but not as families. Even where programs have an impact upon families, they are compartmentalized into stages: infancy, childhood, youth, and the aged.

The first step to treating families seriously is for governments and political parties to adopt specific family policies. The explicit adoption of family

policies encourages governments to confront two cultural forces which have undermined families and communities, namely, the lessening of family autonomy, especially through state programs; and, secondly, the weakening of family through the growth of unrestrained individualism. A specific policy also has a normative influence within society.

Suggestions have been made from time

to time that all legislative proposals should be accompanied by a Family Impact Statement. While desirable in theory, Family Impact Statements require a strong framework if they are to be effective. First, they must be public, and not confined to the policy makers. Second, the impact of any proposal should be assessed by a body independent from the primary policy maker. Third, a mechanism is necessary for the administration of the policy to accord with the pro-marriage and family intentions.

Unless these things are present, a Family Impact Statement is likely to become a pro forma requirement to be “ticked off” and largely ignored.

The adoption of a Marriage and Family Policy Grid could be a useful mechanism for ensuring oversight

and compliance with the headline policy. As many programs are administrative in nature, not requiring specific legislation except the annual Budget process, a Grid could assist both the administrators of programs and the legislators seeking to verify progress. There are at least four areas that a Marriage and Family Policy Grid could cover. These involve the enhancement of stable marriage; the ability of parents to have children;

The first step to treating families seriously is for governments and political parties to adopt specific family policies.

good parenting skills and parental involvement with children; and ongoing involvement by parents with their children when separation occurs.

A Replacement Birthrate

Population growth in many Western nations is declining—in some places, very significantly. Even in nations where slight increases in the birthrate had been recorded over the past decade, these numbers have tended to fall again in the shadow of the global financial crisis. The fact that the global population is continuing to expand should not be a source of complacency in those countries where it is in decline. Otherwise, the consequence of ageing societies will be a weakening of the essential family and community bonds, economic decline, and geopolitical insecurity. Demography is destiny.

Hence, nations should seek to replace their population over the long term. Where fertility rates have fallen to very low levels, this is extremely difficult. Many nations hope that immigration will ameliorate the consequences of low birthrates, but immigration does little to slow the ageing of the population. A natural fertility rate at, or near to, replacement levels, is the best policy to adopt.

One way to accomplish this is to focus more effort on the family-work balance. Effective policies need to achieve an optimal balance between

the pressures to increase female participation in the paid workforce and the necessity to maintain the fertility rate. Confronted with an ageing population, governments have generally invoked three responses: increased productivity, higher levels of participation in the workforce, and raising fertility. Hence, a recent Australian study suggested that increasing female participation would make a major contribution to future growth.

If the tension between participation and fertility is not recognized, there is a danger that one objective will be advanced at the expense of the other. Unless policy makers value the critical importance of having and raising healthy, well-adjusted children, other measures are likely to nullify the expected gains.

Economists can identify measures that are likely to increase female workforce participation. These usually include lower marginal tax rates on second family incomes, the need for parental leave following the birth of a child, adequate child care, and flexible work hours. The idea that the family-work balance is only driven by economic considerations is misplaced, however. Parents require flexibility and choice, not just about the hours worked at any one time, but about the arrangements they make over the course of their lives. The emphasis on short-term paid maternity leave for those in the

workforce ignores the reality that parents balance their family and work responsibilities between them over decades, not just for a few weeks after the birth of a child. A life course approach is all the more important with the delay in partnering, the increase in longevity, and the ageing of the population.

Financial encouragement for having and raising children should not be work related exclusively. If children are critical to the future prosperity of nations, encouragement of parenthood and support for families is a national responsibility and should not rest on employers alone.

Ideally, financial benefits should be available to families whether or not they have both parents in the paid workforce. These benefits can be provided in a variety of forms, ranging from general tax concessions for families with children to childcare and parenting payments. Not only is this equitable, but it recognizes the fact that parents want the flexibility to choose their family and work arrangements over the life course.

Marital Permanence and the Welfare of Children

Reflecting on the mounting social science data, the family scholar Paul Amato describes the two approaches to modern marital relationships as a conflict between the institutional and individual view of marriage. He concludes that policies should support marriage and family:

One widely replicated finding tilts the argument in favour of pro-marriage

policies. That is, studies consistently indicate that children raised by two happily and continuously married parents have the best chance of developing into competent and successful adults. . . . Because we all have an interest in the wellbeing of children, it is reasonable for

social institutions (such as the state) to attempt to increase the proportion of children raised by married parents with satisfying and stable marriages.¹

The proclamation of the ideal of marital permanence and affirmation of marriage as the optimal environment for the raising of children should be at the core of national policy. But

The emphasis on short-term paid maternity leave for those in the workforce ignores the reality that parents balance their family and work responsibilities between them over decades, not just for a few weeks after the birth of a child.

rhetoric is insufficient.

In an era in which the old notion of “buyer beware” has been replaced, at least partially, by “informed consent,” it is remarkable that so few people outside scholarly circles and family practitioners know and understand the consequences for individuals and society of the retreat from marriage. A comprehensive education program is central to a policy to promote marital permanence and the care of children. Marital education programs have already been sponsored in a number of countries, but their coverage is inadequate, and their timing restricted. Providing information and skills to a couple a few weeks or months prior to their wedding is useful, but much more could be done.

The UK Centre for Social Justice proposed five streams: premarital education, antenatal classes, and parenting 0-5 years of age, 5-11, and 11-teens, as well as specific programs for single parents, prisoners, military personnel, and parents of children taken into out-of-home care.²

Better education about relationships should start in schools. With an increasing number of adolescents sexually active, most schools have some form of sex-education. Often debates have raged about the type of education that is appropriate and efficacious, as if the only consequence of ignorance is unwanted pregnancy.

Yet sexually transmitted diseases are at epidemic levels and infertility rising. Equally problematic is the number of children whose lives are disrupted by fatherlessness, separation, or divorce, and who grow up in challenging circumstances. The social, mental, physical, and economic consequences are significant.

A comprehensive relationship education program could include five themes generally missing today:

- 1) the emotional and social dimension of sexuality;
- 2) relationship experiences and relationship building;
- 3) communication and conflict management skills for successful relationships;
- 4) new tacks in pregnancy prevention that address the disconnect between marriage and childbearing and raise awareness about the needs of the child;
- 5) marriage education that focuses on 30 years of social science evidence on why marriage matters to children, its benefits, findings on marital success and failure, and the skills that improve marriage success.

Parenting education is also essential. For an increasing number of people, the ways of parenting that have been traditionally modelled in the family have been lost. United Kingdom MP Frank Field noted that on visits

to schools, ranging from those in poor, marginalized areas to better-off regions, young people repeatedly listed "how to be good parents" as an aspiration for their education. Consequently, he proposed raising knowledge about parenting skills within the school curriculum as a first critical component of a new approach to child poverty "if we are to prevent life's wheel of fortune consistently spinning against the interests of poorer children as a class."³

later, one-third had separated and only 12% married.⁴ An evaluation of one of the trial programs, "Family expectations" in Oklahoma, revealed positive outcomes. Comprising three components—relationship-skills education, family support coordinators, and supportive services—the program resulted in a consistent pattern of significantly positive effects on the quality and status of the couples' relationships, improved co-parenting, and more couples living together.

Premarital education is another area that needs to be expanded. Despite the positive findings, and the common-sense acknowledgement that education about marital relationships can be useful, only a minority of couples undertake

any formal program or course. Traditionally, marriage preparation programs have catered to engaged couples, usually—although not exclusively, and not intentionally—from middle class backgrounds. Recent research, however, shows that the specific aspiration to marry is often strongest among those who have the least access to it, particularly those who are in extreme economic disadvantage. Many of these people are unlikely to come in contact with

existing programs. While many of the existing programs represent the "gold standard" in premarital education, new approaches are also necessary if more couples are to obtain the benefits of information and skills that may be of assistance to them.

Efforts to promote healthy, stable marriages have been embarked upon in a number of countries in recent years. In a British survey, 57% of respondents believed it was right for government to promote marriage.⁵ The U.S. National Fatherhood Initiative Marriage Survey found that 86% agreed that all couples considering marriage should get premarital counselling, 57% of the married respondents said they would attend a free marriage education class if one were available, and 73% of the unmarried persons searching for someone to marry said they would attend a free premarital education class.⁶ The provision of free marriage education vouchers for couples who had notified of their intention to marry was successful in an Australian trial, but the policy was never implemented fully.

Noting the increase in premarital cohabitation, David Popenoe observes that "once established in the culture, cohabitation seems gradually to be corroding the desire of couples to move into marriage," citing Canadian research demonstrating that cohabitation experiences delayed the timing of first marriages by 26%

for men and 19% for women.⁷ A promotion campaign would also need to address this group of couples.

Given the overwhelming social science evidence on the advantages for children of being raised in stable, intact families, and the corresponding disadvantages of other situations, the State should not be value-neutral about the circumstances in which children are conceived, born, and raised. Acknowledging that cohabitation is not going to disappear, Popenoe proposes that efforts should be made "to get more cohabiting couples, when they have children, to shift into marriage and maintain that marriage over the long term."

Valuing Family Stability and Reinforcing Responsibility

SOURCE OF PROBLEM
The weakening of marriage and the increase in divorce over the past four decades has coincided with a retreat from the idea that some couples can be helped to reconcile their differences and maintain their marital relationship before or during family law proceedings. For decades in the U.S., the conciliation services provided by the courts focused on the possible reconciliation of marital problems. As in the case of Australia's Family Law Act, no-fault divorce laws were generally constructed on two pillars: First, the centrality or importance of family; and, secondly, the rights and obligations of spouses, both during marriage and upon its dissolution.

The birth of a child can be a challenge to a couple's marriage—financially, emotionally, physically, and sexually. Much time and effort is given to educating parents about the birthing of a child. Little effort is made to assist couples in enhancing their relationship at this important transition, whether they are married or not. A range of resources and programs have been developed to assist parents in the transition to parenthood. The U.S. Building Strong Families initiative is a program for unmarried parents. It arose from the Princeton Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing study, which suggested that at the time of the birth of their child, most unmarried parents were still romantically involved and optimistic about their relationships, but a year

Efforts to promote healthy, stable marriages have been embarked upon in a number of countries in recent years.

Despite this, the legislation remains today the legislation.

From the 1970s, from reconciliatic divorce with dig

indicated, however, that a significant number of couples regret their decision to divorce and subsequently believe it could have been avoided. The majority of both divorced men and women continue to believe strongly in the institution of marriage.

Professor William Doherty and colleagues reported recently that they could find no studies that asked divorcing people if they would be interested in exploring reconciliation via professional services.⁸ Two previous studies had suggested that the reconciliation rate ranged from about 10-16%. The Doherty study came to a similar conclusion: about one in four individual parents indicated some belief that the marriage could still be saved, and in one out of every nine matched couples both partners indicated such a belief. Overall, in about 45% of couples, one or both partners reported holding hopes for the marriage and a possible interest in reconciliation services. This is a minority percentage, but even a small change in the divorce rate would be significant. Professor Paul Amato considers the impact in the U.S. of a reduction in divorce:

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w the 1980 level suggests that nearly three-quarters of a million fewer children would repeat a grade. Similarly, increasing marital stability to its 1980 level would result in nearly half a million fewer children suspended from school, about 200,000 fewer children engaging in delinquency or violence, a quarter of a million fewer children receiving therapy, about a quarter of a million fewer smokers, about 80,000 fewer children thinking about suicide, and about 28,000 fewer children attempting suicide.⁹

There is a need to rebuild the reconciliation pillar of family law. In the U.S., Professor Doherty and the former Chief Justice of the Georgia Supreme Court, Leah Ward Sears, have proposed "Second Chances" legislation to reduce unnecessary divorce.¹⁰ Their proposal includes establishing a waiting period for divorce of at least a year, with a voluntary early notification letter individuals may use to inform their spouses of their intentions without necessarily filing for divorce. The proposal also requires pre-filing education for parents of minor children considering divorce, with a module on reconciliation and a module on a non-

The taxation system should also reinforce and support stable families in their critical task of raising children. It is an important recognition that two economies exist within nations: the market economy, where exchanges take place through money and where competition and efficiency drive decisions; and the home economy, where exchanges take place through altruistic sharing of goods and services among family members.

Allan Carlson and David Blankenhorn write:

It is precisely the home economy—acts of unpaid production ranging from parental child care and nursing of the sick and the elderly, to gardening, home carpentry and food preparation—that

is the organizing principle of family life and the basis of civil society. . .

These little economies are largely undetected in our measurement of the gross national product, just as they are usually beyond the reach of tax collectors. But they are vitally important. If they thrive, the wellbeing of children and society as a whole improves.¹¹

Society often downplays the importance of raising the next

at the expense of intact families. It is impossible to offer a simple universal prescription for the appropriate recognition of the contribution that married couples make to the wellbeing of individuals and society. However, there are a series of principles that should inform discussions about the appropriate taxation and payments measures. First, fiscal approaches should recognize the unique

contribution of healthy and resilient families to the wellbeing and welfare of individuals, especially children, and to society. At the very least, the taxation and payments systems should not penalize married parents; optimally, it should affirm and support them. Secondly, and more generally,

government should not usurp the role of parents and the family, unless dysfunction threatens the life and welfare of individuals. Government should recognize that the covenanted relationships of love, loyalty, friendship, and trust exist outside the political sphere but are essential to the health of society.

In keeping with these principles, families should be able to keep as much of their income as possible while

Society often downplays the importance of raising the next generation, or celebrates single life at the expense of intact families.

THE SECOND PILLAR IS MISSING NO RECONCILING AUSTRALIAN FAMILY ASSOCIATION

