



City of
Norwood
Payneham
& St Peters

Profile & Policy Paper Families & Children

October 2004

Families and children

Part 1: Introduction & Policy Background

Family policy, which could be defined as *public policy that responds to the contemporary needs of families and that actively supports the integral function of families in Australian society*, occupies a prominent place on the political agenda. This was evident in the recent Federal election, where political parties of all persuasions (including the South Australian-bred *Family First* party) offered a smorgasbord of “family friendly” policies and initiatives to the electorate.

The political prominence of an issue does not necessarily mean, however, that this will be translated into effective policy making. This appears to be the case with family policy, where the approach adopted by governments at both the Federal and State levels, despite considerable effort and resources, generally lacks coherence, is commonly reactive and piecemeal, can be poorly targeted, and is often inadequately funded. And for all the apparent attention and resources devoted to this field, neither the Federal Government, nor the South Australian Government, have an established strategic ***policy framework*** for their policies and services to families and children.

The absence of a cohesive centre to Australian family policy owes its existence in part to two factors. The first of these is the lack of social consensus that exists about what actually constitutes a “family”. The construct of family is viewed through different philosophies, values and attitudes; some more inclusive and embracing than others. In the early years of the twenty-first century, the movement to define the institution of family as traditionally and in some respects as restrictively as possible, has gained considerable political momentum. Although a “restrictive definition” of family may make the challenge of achieving some sort of policy coherence easier, it undermines the principles of inclusiveness and social equity. The second factor that intrudes itself into the complexity of

family policy is the debate over the division between public and private responsibility for family wellbeing, as well as for dealing with family dysfunction. While the scope and mandate for government intervention in family life (in areas such as the protection of children) have been extended dramatically over the past thirty years, there remain substantial philosophical and practical differences about the role of government as a proactive agent in family matters.

The dominant policy themes that underpin family policy – and other key areas of social policy – in South Australia are listed in the chart below. It can be seen that, at the level of broad policy emphasis at least, that there is a close measure of congruence between the principles enunciated by both the South Australian and Commonwealth governments.

Dominant Social Policy Themes

South Australian Government:

- ★ social inclusion
- ★ community capacity & community participation
- ★ early intervention & prevention
- ★ whole of government approach
- ★ partnership
- ★ services coordination & integration

Commonwealth Government:

- ★ inclusiveness
- ★ community capacity
- ★ mutual obligation
- ★ social coalition – “The Government believes social policy is best developed and delivered in partnership with communities, business and individuals.”
Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (2004)

The centrepiece of Federal government family strategy is its *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy*. Initiated in 2000, a subsequent four-year phase of the strategy was announced by the Prime Minister in April 2004, and added to as part of the October 2004 Federal Election campaign. The strategy is built on the principles of early intervention, parenting education, volunteerism, local flexibility, community capacity building, and social coalition building. Consisting of almost half a billion dollars (i.e. with the undertaking made during the election campaign added to the April forward commitment) the *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy* is made up of four program elements:

Communities for Children – funding for local early childhood initiatives targeting up to 45 disadvantaged communities, using a community development approach, via a lead non-government organisation.

Early Childhood–Invest to Grow – funding for national early childhood programs and resources.

Local Answers – “gives communities the power to develop their own solutions and help them help themselves by supporting locally developed and implemented projects.”¹

“Funding under Local Answers supports a range of projects including:

- Parenting and relationship skills projects;
- Early childhood and family projects;
- Projects designed to strengthen the community;
- Mentoring, leadership and youth development projects; and
- Volunteering projects.”²

Choice and Flexibility in Child Care – to “fund the continuation of the in-home care program and provide additional places for families without other formal child care options”³

¹ Australian Government, 2004, *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy – National agenda for early childhood*.

² Liberal Party of Australia, 2004, *The Howard Government Election 2004 Policy: Stronger Families and Communities*.

³ Australian Government, 2004, *Stronger Families and Communities Strategy – National agenda for early childhood*.

Other family-related measures to be introduced by the 4th Howard Government include, the introduction of a 30% child care rebate, increasing the availability of the Child Care Benefit to eligible grandparents, and increasing the maximum rate of Family Tax Benefit where one parent stays at home. ⁴

Since the accession to power of the Rann administration, the South Australian Government has embarked on a major overhaul of its policy and program machinery. Two of these policy reviews in community services have produced new policy agendas in the important areas of **early childhood services** and **child protection**, and each contain an expressed intention to involve local government. The new policy statements on early childhood services ⁵ and child protection ⁶ both emphasise the adoption of a more preventative, holistic and whole-of-government approach. Strengthening communities and building community capacity through community development are seen as vital components of the new policy mix. Local government in its roles as (i) primary gatherer and source of community information, (ii) community catalyst and educator and (iii) local service provider, is viewed as having an important part to play in the future of these statutory service systems:

“There are opportunities to work more with local government, on community development activities for example, and to bring child protection considerations in to regional planning processes. Forums with the LGA will be used to explore the contribution the local government sector can make to our joint efforts.”
Government of South Australia, 2004, *Keeping Them Safe: The South Australian Government’s Child Protection Reform Program*.

The new policy visioning in South Australia offers the prospect of positive reform, as long as resources follow declared policy intentions.

⁴ Liberal Party of Australia, 2004, *The Howard Government Election 2004 Policy: Extra Assistance for Families*.

⁵ SA Department of Human Services, 2003, *Every Chance for Every Child: Making the Early Years Count, A Framework for Early Childhood Services in South Australia*.

⁶ Government of South Australia, 2004, *Keeping Them Safe: The South Australian Government’s Child Protection Reform Program*.

Part 2: A Profile of Families & Children in the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters

Families come in different shapes and sizes, and the definition of “family” has changed over recent decades in line with changes in behaviour and social attitudes. Age structure is another determinant of the nature of families in any given locality. Large numbers of either young adults or older people in the population is likely to mean that there will be relatively high numbers of families consisting of couples only and minus children. This is the case in the City of Norwood Payneham & St Peters. As the table below shows, the dominant form of family in the municipality in 2001 was “couple families without children”, followed by couple families with children. The position of these two types of families was reversed in the Census data for Adelaide as a whole. The proportion of one parent families in Norwood Payneham & St Peters in 2001 was slightly below the figure for the Adelaide MSR.

Family Type - 2001

	NPSP %	Adel. MSR %
Couple family with children	38	44
Couple family without children	43	37
One parent family	16	17
Other family ⁷	3	2

Registered marriage remains the relationship of choice for couples, and this is further accentuated when there are children in the family. In 2001, eighty-six percent (86%) of all couple families in Norwood Payneham & St Peters were in a registered marriage. Ninety-three percent (93%) of couple families **with children** were in a registered marriage, as were seventy-nine percent (79%) of couple families without children.

⁷ Other Family is defined as a family of other related individuals residing in the same household. These individuals do not form a couple or parent-child relationship with any other person in the household and are not attached to a couple or one parent family in the household. ABS 2001 Census Dictionary

Marriage occupies a somewhat less prominent position when looking at the adult population of Norwood Payneham & St Peters aged 20 years & over (see table below). The lower proportion of married females stands out in the table, and this can be explained by looking at the proportion of females who were widows in 2001. The high proportion of female widows is directly related to the comparatively high number of older persons in the local population. In 2001, 64% of women in the municipality aged 75 years & over were widows.

Marital Status: All persons 20 years & above – NPSP 2001
URP data

	Males	Females
Married	48.3	41.2
Separated	3.4	3.4
Divorced	8.0	10.5
Widowed	3.6	15.8
Never married	36.6	29.1

The patterns of family formation in Australia have changed over the last several decades. People now generally get married later and defer parenthood until their thirties and even forties. The primary parenting period of the life-cycle tends now, therefore, to be in the 35 years to 49 years age group. For this reason, the 35-49 years age group has a different profile of marital status compared to that of the adult population as a whole, as the following table indicates.

	Married		Separated		Divorced		Widowed		Never married	
	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
35-49	55.0	55.7	5.3	5.5	11.1	15.1	0.4	1.3	28.3	22.4
Total 15 yrs & over	44.5	38.9	3.2	3.1	7.3	9.8	3.3	14.7	41.8	33.5

The age-related nature of family formation is emphasised in the following chart summarising the character of families and relationships according to adult age group in Norwood Payneham & St Peters in 2001. For example, of all 25-34 year olds only 20% were parents with children, compared to 35-44 year olds where 53% were parents with children.

Families & relationships by Age group in NPSP

Of all 25-34 year olds in 2001:

18% were a husband, wife or partner in a couple family with children

2% were a lone parent in a one parent family

27% were a husband, wife or partner in a couple family without children

15% were members of group households

18% lived alone

Of all 35-44 year olds in 2001:

46% were a husband, wife or partner in a couple family with children

7% were a lone parent in a one parent family

13% were a husband, wife or partner in a couple family without children

18% lived alone

Of all 45-54 year olds in 2001:

40% were a husband, wife or partner in a couple family with children

9% were a lone parent in a one parent family

20% were a husband, wife or partner in a couple family without children

20% lived alone

In Norwood Payneham & St Peters on Census night 2001, there were children under teenage years in close to **6 out of every 10 couple families** with children. A little less than half the children in couple families with children were under 10 years of age. In one parent families, in contrast, there were children under teenage years in fewer than 4 out of 10 families, and just over 2 in 10 of these families contained children under 10 years of age.

Age of Children – NPSP 2001

Children counted at home on Census night

	0-4	5-9	10-12	13-14	15-24	25 & over
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Couple family with children	24	22	12	8	24	10
One parent family	8	16	12	10	32	22

In 2001, children (defined as 0-14 year olds) made up 14% of the population of the municipality. This was almost five percentage points below the figure for the Adelaide MSR. The biggest difference between Norwood Payneham & St Peters and the Adelaide-wide figure occurred in the age cohort of 5-14 years, as shown in the table below.

Age Group	NPSP	Adelaide MSR
	%	%
0-4	4.6	5.9
5-14	9.3	12.9
0-14	13.9	18.8

In well over half of all couple families with children were both parents working in 2001. And 8 out of 10 couple families with children had at least one parent working. In contrast, in just over half of one parent families was the parent in employment.

Families with children: Labour Force Status – NPSP 2001

	%
<i>Couple family with children:</i>	
Both employed full-time	19
One employed full-time other part-time	33
Only one employed full-time	18
Both employed part-time	4
Only one employed part-time	5
Neither employed	14
<i>One parent family:</i>	
Employed full-time	30
Employed part-time	21
Not employed	47

The work force participation of women, particularly of married women with children, has changed over recent decades. This trend over the most recent decade is reflected in the table below, where it can be seen that women have increased their level of participation in the work force.

Women in the Work force - NPSP

	<i>Women employed, working</i>	<i>Not in labour force</i>
1991	46	49
1996	46	48
2001	51	43

Yet despite the greater role that women now play in the work force in aggregate compared to the past, the nature of the labour force participation of women in general still varies markedly from that of men.

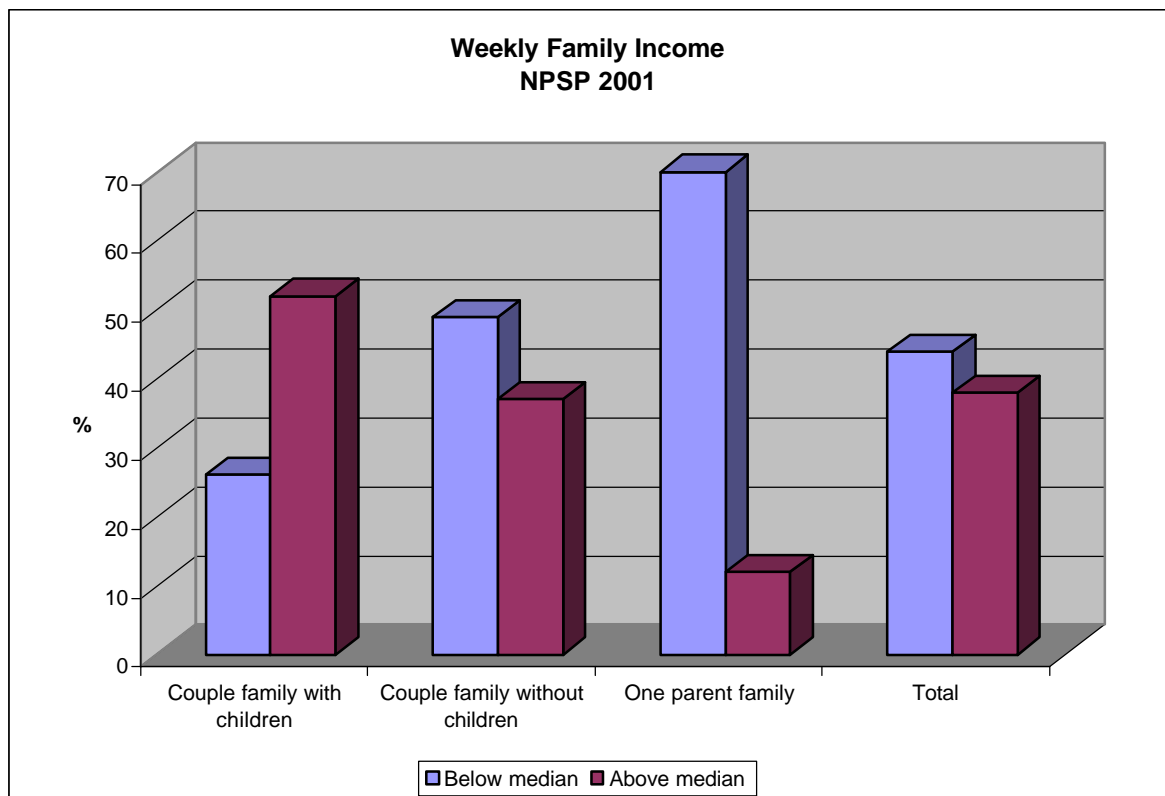
Women are much more likely to be working part-time, a fact attributable, at least in part, to the maintenance of the role of women as primary carers of children and other dependent relatives.

Structure of Work – NPSP 2001

proportion of employed, working

	Full-time	Part-time
Male	76	22
Female	54	43

The level of participation in the labour force impacts directly on the level of individual and family income. The weekly family income of the three major types of families, compared to the median, is shown in the chart below.⁸



⁸ The median weekly family income in NPSP in 2001 was \$1,000-\$1,199.

The comparative financial disadvantage confronted by one parent families stands out in sharp relief in the chart. The level of economic disadvantage experienced by single parents, which is related substantially to the character of their participation in the labour force (see below), is a nationwide trend. The continuing straightened circumstances of many single parent families in this country has been underlined in the recently-released *2003 Family Characteristics Survey*, where it was found that the *median weekly income of lone parents with children aged 0–17 years was \$412, less than half the income of parents in couple families with children (\$1,167 per week). In 2003, 58% of lone parents received a government pension, benefit or allowance as their main source of income compared to 8% of couples with children aged 0–17 years.* (ABS, Family Characteristics Australia, 2004, p. 7)

The relatively high proportion of couple families without children with a weekly family income below the median in the chart arises from the fact that older people (usually on fixed incomes) are substantially represented in this group.

In families with children, the relationship between parental participation in the labour force and income can be seen clearly in the following table. It is evident from the table that follows that the capacity to generate **dual incomes** (even if only from part-time work) plays a large part in elevating the income position of couple families with children over that of one parent families. The absence of paid employment also has a very apparent effect on weekly income, regardless of family type.

Weekly Family Income & Labour Force Status – NPSP 2001

	above median %	below median %
<i>Couple family with children:</i>		
Both employed full-time	76	8
One employed full-time other part-time	67	14
Only one employed full-time	45	37
Both employed part-time	56	30
Only one employed part-time	27	43
Neither employed	19	58
<i>One parent family:</i>		
Employed full-time	25	46
Employed part-time	7	82
Not employed	7	81

In 2001, there were nearly **six times as many female lone parents** (912) living in the municipality as male lone parents (159). Although similar proportions of female and male lone parents were working, the patterns of full-time employment were different. 90% of male lone parents in employment worked full-time, while only half female lone parents in employment worked full-time.

Lone parents and labour force participation – NPSP 2001

	<i>Female Lone Parent</i> %	<i>Male Lone Parent</i> %
Working full-time	31	55
Working part-time	31	6
Unemployed	7	13
Not in labour force	29	24

Some of the difference in the patterns of work of female and male lone parents is likely to be related to the fact that a higher proportion of female lone parents had at least one pre-teenage dependent child in the family (0-12 years of age). 57% of female lone parents had a child less than 13 years of age in the family, while 42% of male lone parents had a pre-teenage child.

The income differentials between couple families with children and one parent families have a series of consequential quality of life impacts, including access to owner-occupation and the type of dwelling structure in which families live. In 2001, 85% of couple families with children in Norwood Payneham & St Peters either owned, or were purchasing, their own home. Just over half of all one parent families were likewise owner-purchasers. Forty-four percent of one parent families were in rented accommodation (almost a quarter of this rental group were in public housing), compared to 13% of couple families with children.

Family Type and Tenure – NPSP 2001

	Couple families with children	Couple families without child.	One parent families	Total families
Fully owned	44	49	32	44
Being purchased	41	22	20	28
Rented	13	23	44	24
(Public housing ⁹)	5	8	23	11

The place of the rental market, as well as less expensive forms of housing, in the housing profile of one parent families can be seen from another perspective in the following table. Flats and semi-detached dwellings had much greater prominence in the housing outcomes for one parent families than for couple families with children.

⁹ Families in public housing as a percentage of families in rental tenure.

Dwelling Structure and Household/Family Type – NPSP 2001

occupied private dwellings containing family, group and lone person households

	Separate house %	Semi-detached %	Flat %
Couple family with children	87	9	4
Couple family without child.	65	19	14
One parent family	61	22	16
Group household	46	24	29
Lone person household	31	24	44
<i>Total</i>	<i>54</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>25</i>