

Main Menu

Home
 Subscribe
 Publications
 About \ Patrons
 Your State/Territory
 Donate

Campaigns - National
 Campaigns - State
 Email your Politician
 Letter writing tips
 National Marriage Day
 Contact Us

About us \ Patrons

Founded in 1980, the Australian Family Association is a not-for-profit, voluntary, and non-party political organisation which has been formed to provide a forum and a vehicle for those individuals and organisations in the community concerned with the strengthening and support of the family.

Patrons

[Definition of Marriage and Family](#)

[Objectives](#)

[Organisation](#)

[Membership](#)

[Publications](#)

[Understanding the family as a social institution](#)

Patrons

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Definition of marriage and family

Fundamental to the position of the Australian Family Association are MARRIAGE as defined in the Marriage Act 1961 and the Family Law Act as 'the union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others voluntarily entered into for life and the FAMILY which is composed essentially of a father, mother and children; in a wider but still necessary relationship, of grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles; a kinship group of human beings linked by ties of blood, marriage and adoption, structured to bear and rear children, to care for the young, the sick and the old and other human needs.

The family has been acknowledged by the United Nations in its Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as "the natural and fundamental group unit of society entitled to protection by society and the State."

The Association holds that the family is the basic unit on which human societies are built and is the prime agency for the total development of children, i.e. the transmission of moral, ethical and cultural values, and for the ongoing social and emotional support for all its members. Its natural purpose is to serve as the chief functioning mechanism for the primary delivery of social services in the fields of nurture, education, health and welfare.

The Association respects the sanctity of life from conception to natural death. It recognises the need for care and compassion for the broken family and for the support of all people in need. However, its activities are directed towards the consolidation of the family unit: seeking the support of public policy so as to forestall the causes which today lead to the disintegration of the family and its fundamental role as the basic unit of our society.

[Return to the top](#)

Objectives

The objectives for which the Association is established are as follows:

- (i) to cultivate within society an appreciation that the integrity and well-being of the family is essential to the stability, morale, security and prosperity of the Australian nation;
- (ii) to analyse laws and policies for their effect on the family and to formulate and promote corrective measures as necessary;
- (iii) to support initiatives taken by other individuals and organisations in support of the natural family;
- (iv) by means of conferences, seminars and the active involvement of individuals and groups, to create public awareness of the fundamental importance of the family unit;
- (v) to facilitate research and act as a resource centre for the effective pursuit of the Association's objectives.

[Return to the top](#)

Organisation

There is a Federal Executive, with Branches in all States, each with a State President, Secretary and Executive. Active groups within State Branches are based on Federal Electorates or suitable towns or regions. Each group has a Chairman and Convenor and normally comprises 10 to 12 members. Briefing and resource material is provided through States' Secretaries.

[Return to the top](#)

Membership

Any family/person who:

- (i) supports the objectives of the Association;
- (ii) submits to the Secretary of a State Branch, in the prescribed form, an application for membership which application is approved by that State Branch; and
- (iii) pays the membership fee for the year then current,

may be a member of the Association.

[Return to the top](#)

Publications

The AFA publishes The Australian Family journal (3 issues/year) and the Family Update newsletter (6 issues/year) which are mailed to all members and are available to universities, schools and libraries at subscription rates.

[Return to the top](#)

Understanding the family as a social institution

ONE: The family is the primary nucleus on which all other elements in human society rest. It is essentially composed of father, mother and children. In a wider, yet still necessary, relationship, it embraces grandparents and grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. This can be defined as the "extended", rather than the "nuclear" family.

TWO: Without regard to its moral, emotional or aesthetic purpose, the biological purpose of the family, thus defined, is to serve as the chief functioning mechanism for the primary delivery of social services. It is the unit fashioned by nature for the primary care of the young, of the sick and of the old; those who, by definition, must be cared for by others.

THREE: The capability of the family to fulfil its natural responsibilities depends not merely on the moral and religious ideas of the community, but on the legal, social, economic, cultural and intellectual institutions, policies and practices of society as a whole. These institutions, policies and practices should protect the capability of the family to fulfil its biological and social purposes.

FOUR: Since the family's functions relate to the physical, intellectual, social, educational and moral needs of its individual members at every stage of their lives, the family logically is designed to be a lifetime institution, from which individual members may temporarily depart without affecting the permanence of the institution.

FIVE: The institution commences with the marriage of one man and one woman. To create a family, it envisages the procreation of children. A marriage is thus defined as a voluntary contract between one man and one woman, which they intend to last for life, in which they assume contractual obligations towards each other and towards the children whom they bring into existence. This being so, the law should define, create and enforce the contract. Hence, the law should define marriage as a contract; protect it in exactly the same manner as all other contracts; punish in civil damages those who, having freely entered into it, wilfully and negligently break or repudiate their contractual obligations; protect the innocent party against exploitation or wrong-doing by the guilty. Equally, the civil law may provide relief from a contract which has become intolerable for the innocent party by reason of the conduct of the other. Society may choose to give legal recognition to other forms of co-habitation, which in Roman Law were known as "concubinage", purely temporary arrangements terminable on the demand of one party alone. Even if the law gives recognition to such arrangements, they should not be confused with marriage, which envisages permanency.

SIX: Society should recognise the different biological and psychological functions of the mother and father. It should require the latter normally to maintain the family by virtue of his work, which society should reward with a minimum wage or salary sufficient to maintain a family. The maintenance of the family should be the financial responsibility of the father and not of the State, unless the father proves incapable of fulfilling his obligations. The law should not inhibit the legal or ethical right of the mother to engage in outside employment. Society, through its systems of taxation, family allowances and endowment, and similar provisions, should ensure, however, that no mother is forced to engage in outside employment through economic pressure.

SEVEN: There are other relationships which involve and associate men, women and children in ways other than through the nuclear or extended family. These include a variety of family structures. However, there is only one form of marriage: a voluntary contract between one man and one woman, intended to last for life and envisaging children. The association of two homosexuals, for example, is a relationship but not a marriage, since one of the essential elements of the definition is lacking.

EIGHT: Society has a very clear responsibility to meet the needs — economic, social, legal and cultural — of all those who cannot meet their own needs, whether married or otherwise, whether within a family or not. That is the function of social services and should be embraced within a social services policy, clearly defined as such. There should be no discrimination in the provision of social assistance to the necessitous, whatever their legal position within the framework of society. Society, however, for its own preservation should clearly declare and practically sustain its preference for marriage, as defined, and for the family, as defined. That is the function of a national family policy, which is thus distinguished from a national social services policy, equally necessary though the latter may be.

[Return to the top](#)

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