
MEDIA RELEASE

23 July 2009

National Stepfamily Awareness Day

Sunday (25 July 2010) is National Stepfamily Awareness Day. This is an opportunity to celebrate and acknowledge stepfamilies, which are now estimated to make up 1 in 5 Australian families or around one million family households.

“Stepparents fulfil an important role in the lives of the children and young people they care for”, said Samantha Page, Executive Director of FRSA. “Often they have to work much harder than other parents to win the love and respect of their step children and to foster a harmonious family environment”.

“There are many unique challenges that stepfamilies face which are not well understood in the community. Friends and extended family often don't realise just how hard it can be for stepfamilies, particularly in the first few years. It is not uncommon for stepfamilies to go through stages of confusion, conflict and crisis before finding their way and developing strong family bonds. This can take a lot of time and understanding”.

Contemporary stepfamilies formed after divorce or separation can be more complex. Children are often maintaining relationships with both of their biological parents, which can mean they are in a shared care arrangement spending time in two households, while having to adjust to the new relationships they have with stepparents and step brothers/sisters and extended family. It can be a difficult time for everyone.

“Our message to stepfamilies is don't be an island, there is lots of support available and there is nothing wrong with asking for help. You are not alone; there are many other stepfamilies who have been through difficult tough times. For those stepfamilies that have survived and are now thriving – congratulations! Make sure you celebrate this weekend”.

Useful resources for Stepfamilies:

- Visit Stepfamilies Australia at www.stepfamily.org.au for tipsheets and resources as well as information on local support programs.
- Read FRSA's article for stepfamilies online at www.frsa.org.au/site/step_blended.php or browse for resources on our directory at www.frsa.org.au/site/Resource_Directory.php
- Access parenting advice for stepparents on the national parenting website Raising Children – www.raisingchildren.net.au/articles/raising_a_stepchild.html
- Visit the Reach Out website which has an article for young people and an interactive forum – www.reachout.com.au

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FRSA is the national peak body for family relationship services operating across Australia. For more information visit www.frsa.org.au or contact FRSA on 02 6162 1811 or communications@frsa.org.au.