

# Editorial



The role of parents, their relationship to their children, and the rights of parents and children as individuals are the underlying themes of this issue.

A great deal is written about social changes in society today, and the increasing stress this puts on parents in providing a secure environment for their child's development. It was encouraging to see that the first National Family Conference was held in May this year. This focuses attention on the family at a national level and gives recognition to the fact that the family is in interaction with all components of society and is directly affected by economic and social policies.

The family, a unit of society, cannot be insulated from the changing nature of society. As people involved and interested in family and child welfare, we need to continually examine not only what is happening within the family, but how components of society, outside the family, are affecting that system. It is these components which influence roles, relationships and the implementation of rights.

In this issue several aspects of family and child welfare are discussed. Cliff Picton reports on his research into the attitudes of adoptees, adoptive and natural parents about access to information. In the first study of its kind in Australia, he explores how current adoption law affects the individuals involved, and proceeds to suggest changes to the law.

The article by Graeme Gregory also explores the area of adoption. He reviews the proposed U.S. Model State Adoption Act and Procedures, which recognises the adoptee's rights and in Mr. Gregory's words, "treats the adoptee as a person".

The article by Drake Brockman *et al* presents an interesting model for the training of homemakers. The use of homemakers or family aides as supports for families with young children is an important development. Such a programme builds upon a viable system in contrast to a service which only supports separate components of a system. There is still debate as to the effectiveness of these services, and what inputs are necessary for these programmes to work. It is useful to have a report which describes and reports upon the evaluation of a particular training programme.

In another article Katz reports on an Australian study of lone fathers. As we begin to move towards a National Family Policy, it is extremely important that we gain knowledge as to the needs of all family styles. Katz also explores the helping systems used

by lone fathers, and gives feedback as to the lone fathers' perception of the effectiveness of formal helping systems.

Other articles in this issue focus on remedial aspects of child welfare. Such a juxtaposition between remedial and preventive aspects should serve to remind the reader that there is a need to understand and support the child from all perspectives. I hope that this journal will continue to reflect a broad perspective of remediation, prevention and developmental aspects of the complex area of family and child welfare.

The journal is concerned with stimulating the development of knowledge in family and child welfare, dissemination of information and seeks to encourage people to think in broader terms about their work so their experience can be shared with others.

I hear a constant comment that not enough is written about the Australian family or of programmes being implemented in child welfare. This journal gives an opportunity to change that situation. As people interested in this work, we need to know of the valuable programmes which are taking place at grass roots as well as policy level. With such knowledge shared we will be able to move towards a better understanding of what really constitutes the welfare of the child and family in this country.

The International Year of the Child 1979 highlighted the gaps between theoretical and practical understanding of the needs of the child. It also highlighted our apparent inability to change situations for the child and family, both on a national and international level. We still appear to be a long way from a coordinated society with all systems operating for the welfare of the child and family. We need continued development and sharing of knowledge that will bring us closer to really understanding the child. I hope this journal will provide a medium for such sharing.

Finally, I would like to encourage all readers working in the area of family and child welfare to write down your experiences and share them with others, so that we increase our understanding of what is "the best interests" of the child and family.

Margarita Frederico.