

## Editorial

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It is with considerable sadness that I am writing for the final time for *Children Australia*. Rachael and I, together with our Editorial Consultants, have been informed by Cambridge University Press that they will no longer be publishing the journal after December 2020. Not only has COVID served up a range of difficulties to us all, but now there will be one less opportunity for publishing for both academic and practice professionals in the child, youth and family sector.

Scholarly publishing is, as our readers will be aware, in a state of disruption, not only due to the impacts of the pandemic but also due to the increasing amount of information made freely available online, and often in Open Access arrangements. It is expensive to publish and already in Australia the journals *Developing Practice* and *Family Matters*, have ceased to exist. One of the difficulties for academics in the social sciences, social work and health sciences field is the cost of paying for publication on Open Access platforms, with a second issue being the demise of a significant number of these journals in the last two decades. One report suggests that the better part of 200 Open Access journals have disappeared over this period (Kwon, 2020), so I suppose it is hardly surprising that a comparatively small journal, like *Children Australia*, with a diminished subscription base will go out of production too.

However, at this time it is also important to reflect on the achievements of *Children Australia* which has completed 45 years of publication – quite an accomplishment given some of the rocky moments we have experienced over the decades. The journal was established to provide a forum for discussion of issues in the child and family welfare sector. First published under the title *Australian Child and Family Welfare*, the initial co-editors were Rev. Denis Oakley and Dr. Peter O'Connor. An excerpt from the first Editorial (Oakley & O'Connor, 1976, p. 3) is included here.

We aim for the broad spectrum of people who make up the vast army of workers in the child and family welfare field – social workers, welfare officers, cottage parents, marriage guidance counsellors etc. We also hope to include contributions from those people, who use the social welfare services. Our concern is to open up discussion on policies and practices to discuss innovations and the raising of standards.

The journal's focus was one of promoting the integration of ideas, theory and practice in the child welfare sector – one that linked academic study and professional practice. The subscription base was made up of universities, child welfare organisations and professionals in the child welfare and related sectors who provided training, programmes and services, and the journal was delivered quarterly in hard copy. Some subscribers, mainly universities, have maintained their subscriptions for all of the 45 years, as well as some professionals being ongoing supporters and contributors to the journal. There are too many people to be named individually, but Frank Ainsworth and Chris Goddard stand out in this regard. In addition to its primary role, the journal ethos was to support both academics and professional practitioners in writing about their research and practice, and we have always given additional assistance to those who were 'new' to publishing their work or unfamiliar with the academic standards required. This has included PhD, Masters and Honours students and practitioners who have wanted to write about programmes, research or experiences in the field.

The journal was initially under the auspice of the National Children's Bureau of Australia, but this had changed by the early 1990s – following the name change to '*Children Australia*' – with OzChild, Victoria, taking up the role of auspice. The editing of the journal also changed over time, but La Trobe University in Melbourne has long provided the editorial role with Margarita Frederico (1980–1988) and Lloyd Owen (1988–2004) being two of the longer standing academics to take this on. Lloyd Owen (2005) wrote the history of the journal when it achieved its 30 years of publication and I cannot improve on this!

I became involved in 2003 and commenced as the editor in 2005. At this time, the journal had Lorraine Redshaw, based at OzChild in Melbourne, as a part time administrative officer, but of course her role was so much broader than this. She supported me wonderfully well as I learnt about editing and other facets of journal production. Many subscribers and contributors will remember her personal calls to talk with them about their work or subscriptions, and we were all very sad when Lorraine decided to retire. It also left the journal needing a production arrangement and this became the role of Australian Academic Press for a time before being handed over to Cambridge University Press. In September 2011, Rachael Sanders joined me as co-editor, and we have worked together on the journal ever since. It has been a collegial relationship which has been much valued by us both over the 10 years and, like other relationships that have

developed through the production of the journal, it has endured through difficult times. I am particularly appreciative of Rachael's patience during the times when cancer and treatment rendered me less able to do my share of the editing role.

However, all the steps along the way are less important than the academic or practice contribution a journal makes, and this is the invisible side of the enterprise. The Editorial Consultants, originally representing each State in Australia, broadened to include our colleagues across 'the ditch' in New Zealand. These busy people have always responded to special requests for urgent reviews, provided commentaries on issues pertinent to child and family welfare and promoted the journal. As we moved to a more international basis, we were fortunate to have Editorial Consultants in the USA, the UK, Ireland, India and South Africa as well, and this brought a number of papers from overseas with a variety of topics and perspectives. The journal broadened its scope of topics too, though always with child, youth and family well-being the core focus. We included a Special Issue to our production programme from time to time with several of these drawn from conferences and a number like the Issue on Social Pedagogy and this year's Issue on Hoarding being examples. All this takes time, of course, and only happens with the support of people willing to put in the extra time that special issues take. Guest Editors often need regular support, reviewers for papers have to be organised and authors stepped through the production process if they are new to publishing.

Also behind the scenes are the academics and professionals who give voluntarily of their time to review papers and provide book reviews, some of whom have supported us in this way throughout the years. We have been fortunate to build relationships with many

people across the globe through the reviewing process and have always appreciated those who we have contacted 'out of the blue' on a specialised topic who have taken on a review or helped us to find the right person to complete it. We also need to acknowledge the support of Cambridge University Press staff who have provided us with support, information and guidance through the production process.

Long-term friendships so often develop from an enterprise like the *Children Australia* journal, and I'm sure many of us will continue to network with news and ideas. It was disappointing not to find a new 'owner' for the journal, but this won't detract from staying in touch. Particular thanks are due to those who have encouraged Rachael and me to keep the journal alive and relevant with Dr. Gaye Mitchell being a stoic support in the face of various challenges and many others keeping in touch with ideas and suggestions for journal content.

We hope that 2020 has been kind to you in spite of the COVID pandemic and wish you a safe and happy Christmas and New Year. Thank you . . . to you all . . . authors, reviewers, Editorial Consultants and supporters.

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