

Editorial

The possibility of the physical and/or sexual abuse of students with disabilities is an area for continuing vigilance in educational settings, in the light of occasional reports of such problems in institutional, residential care or other settings.

Teachers and other Child Care professionals have long been aware of the presence of abused children in their classes and of the necessary reporting procedures. For children with disabilities, recent movements towards more inclusive residential, educational, transportation and other community living practices, may possibly expose some to even greater risk of abuse in their more open lifestyles than in earlier times. Frustration and conflict for inexperienced or ill-trained caregivers may result in one form of abuse. Exposure to a wide range of age peers with the attendant variety of social values and behaviours may lead to other forms of abuse through teasing and bullying. And, the possibility of sexual abuse, while also reported in institutional environments, may nevertheless be a risk for students having wider contact within the community, especially as they reach adolescence.

A recent book reviewed in this issue of the Journal, *Violence and Abuse in the Lives of People with Disabilities* by Dick Sobsey, makes the point that many Special Education teaching strategies may serve to place students with disabilities at even greater risk of abuse. Such practices as training for compliance, indiscriminate generalisation across trainers and the claim that some programs teach dysfunctional sexual behaviour are likely to result in some students becoming more vulnerable to abuse. The point is well made in that volume that well intentioned Special Education teaching strategies should help to prevent students from abuse rather than result in greater exposure to it. Of all the possible sources of physical or sexual abuse of students with disabilities, our teaching methodology is one which educators can be well prepared to eliminate as we develop better understanding of the many factors associated with that devastating behaviour.

This issue of the Journal brings a number of interesting perspectives on Special Education practice. A selection is presented of Keynote Addresses from the recent National Conference in Darwin of AASE. These all contribute international perspectives on Spe-

cial Education, beginning with Peter Mittler's review of policy developments in United Nations forums and practices observed in the education of students with intellectual disabilities in a number of countries. An innovative approach to the sharing of ideas on teacher preparation for Inclusive Education practices is described by Colin MacMullin and Mary Anne Vaz. This collaborative approach involving Flinders University and the Sarawak Teachers College in Malaysia is an interesting case study in the development of Special Education training practices across quite different cultural settings. Cross cultural collaboration is also a feature of Penny Price's paper on developments in countries in the South Pacific. With a focus on the further development of Early Intervention services in those countries, a strong point is made for the importance of advocacy movements in all countries to focus attention on these needs.

Cyd Wright's paper, a conference presentation, to the 1994 New Zealand Special Education Annual Conference, commemorates the contribution to Special Education in New Zealand of Len Cosson. Wright presents some interesting perspectives on the inclusion movement in Special Education and the effects of public funding policies on service delivery. Our two associations share a number of similar experiences in wrestling with service delivery alternatives at this time.

The remaining contributions to this issue present data on Special Education services within Australia. Dempsey & Foreman present comparative data on school/class placement for students with disabilities, drawn from data collected from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. This innovative report draws attention to the informative data sets of interest to Special Education and already held by government agencies. Problems facing parents of hearing impaired children in the selection of appropriate Early Intervention programs are examined by Deslandes and Burnip. While concerned with services in South Australia, this paper draws attention to many general issues for parents in trying to understand the many apparent Early Intervention services and to match them with their families' own needs.

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Editor