



Editorial

This editorial is being written at a time when in Victoria there is active discussion about new directions for child welfare. This discussion has already been held in other States, and in this issue there is comment on the new N.S.W. Community Welfare Act, and its consequences in fostering.

The discussion in Victoria has been stimulated by the publication of the Reports from two Committees, the Report of Early Childhood Services (the report of a Committee chaired by David Green) and the Child Welfare Practice and Legislation Review Committee Report (chaired by Terry Carney). The excitement and optimism of having such enquiries is tempered by a concern as to the effect of these reports. This concern is brought about through being aware that in the past we have had a series of other Government Reports (e.g. Norgard 1976) and few of the recommendations have been acted upon. A second factor which can temper enthusiasm is that Enquiries can have a tendency to look for simple solutions to complex situations. As Isobel Stamm states in this issue, when someone tells you there is a solution to all human problems it will be 'neat, . . . obvious . . . and wrong'!

Perhaps one of the difficulties is that we look for blueprints as solutions when, if welfare services are to be effective, they have to be flexible and hence open to change. As Services become established there can become an inbuilt reluctance to change, and this can make it difficult to study reports in an open manner. Another difficulty is that in the area of practice in child welfare there is a great deal of wisdom and knowledge which is unwritten. This knowledge must be tapped before any review in child welfare can be considered adequate. A third difficulty is that of avoiding the tendency to believe (perhaps hope!) that if only a 'right' decision can be made at the 'right' time everything about a child's care will be all right. Experience has shown that it is the services available after a decision is made regarding a child's welfare that has the greatest effect on the child. In other words, as has been stated at many seminars convened to discuss the above reports, if the services are not adequate, neither model legislation nor administration will go very far in improving child welfare.

In This Issue

This issue is a double issue which includes a challenge to the belief that Residential Care should be structured along a family model (Hansen and Ainsworth); a report of a seminar given to honour the work of Joyce Grant, Senior Psychiatric Social Worker, Royal Children's Hospital, and two papers delivered by Peter Boss and Lois Bryson respectively at bi-monthly luncheons held by the Children's Bureau. The luncheon is providing an important forum for practitioners to hear and discuss current welfare issues.

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