

picture and we have an obligation to do the best we can with both.

Contributors to this issue take us on just such journeys of exploration. The work of the late Robin Clark points up thoughtful exploration of many of the challenging issues in the field of child and family welfare. Robin's commitment to enquiry and reflective practice is a constructive legacy. Sherrie Coote and Pam Spall share with us some of the detail.

Experienced practitioner, Meredith Kiraly has provided a challenging list of things we are not getting right in the field. Suspect attitudes at large in our organisational and institutional cultures account for some professional and personal practice slippage, and compromise appears evident in others. 'What's wrong with child welfare' complements the outcome concerns we get from sources like CREATE's Report Cards and provides useful background for thinking about the new CAFWAA Policy Paper released in August, *A Time to Invest in Australia's most disadvantaged children, young people and their families*. This paper is essential reading for politicians and civic leaders as well as those in the field.

Brenda Clare, another experienced practitioner, also challenges the orthodoxies which have developed around the notion of family reunification. She is suggesting a need to move beyond attractive rhetoric and guesswork. More care with definition and evidence is needed, as well as better application of what we do know.

Max Liddell and Chris Goddard report on events and raise concerns about the case of the Woomera detention centre and

asylum seeker children. At a time when governments have begun to acknowledge the importance for the long term of childhood events, we have a serious clash of principles, policies and priorities.

Judith Bessant takes us into a theoretical excursion around the status of youth in society and problems with policy. Questions of justice and obligation flow from conceptions of youth as vulnerable and incomplete on the one hand, and troublesome or dangerous on the other. Youth may be in transition but our view of this overlooks their wholeness and citizenship. This leads into some interesting and important territory in which my thinking has recently been advanced by a recent book, *Youth Lifestyles In A Changing World* by Steven Miles (2000). We hope to include a review of this book in a later issue.

Our book reviews this time include an assessment by Dorothy Scott of the mentoring materials produced by the staff at Lisa Lodge-Hayeslee, *Helping Hands: A mentoring program guide, training manual and mentor manual*; and a review of the 2nd edition of Phillip Swain's book, *In the shadow of the law: The legal context of social work practice*.

Lloyd Owen

REFERENCE

Miles, S. (2000) *Youth lifestyles in a changing world*, Philadelphia: Open University Press.

A Time to Invest **in Australia's most disadvantaged children, young people and their families**

The problems experienced by children, young people and families are too often compounded by poor quality, and at best patchy service responses.

Reform of Australia's child and family welfare system requires a comprehensive, strategic and long term planning approach, by all levels of government, non-government agencies and the community itself.

A Time to Invest paints a picture of how we might establish opportunities to empower and enrich Australia's families and children.

A Time to Invest has been published by The Child and Family Welfare Association of Australia (CAFWAA). It is available online at: www.acwa.asn.au/CAFWAA, or contact: CAFWAA, Locked Bag 13, Haymarket, NSW 1240. Tel: 02 9281 8822
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