

experience. It is fitting, then, that we are able to include two articles that address the issues of Indigenous children and carers. However, first up, we have published Freda Briggs' Address to the First World Scientific Congress of Sexual Health held in April this year. In this Address we are confronted by the realities of how children who are victims of sexual abuse are dealt with in Australia. Clearly, we have a long way to go to prevent the added emotional abuse caused through the clumsiness and inappropriateness of our legal systems, and Freda's perspectives are challenging and a call to action.

The first of the papers concerning Indigenous children is by Patricia Elarde and Clare Tilbury who conducted research into the support needs of Indigenous carers. As they aptly point out, much child welfare research does not differentiate between the needs of Indigenous and non-Indigenous clients and/or does not specifically address issues concerning Indigenous children, families and communities. Given this situation, evidence used in practice is not informed by Indigenous perspectives and knowledge. The paper explores the support needs of Indigenous carers in the context of the increasingly detailed regulatory framework for out-of-home care, suggesting there should be more investment in ongoing support for carers and more personal contact between the statutory department and the carer/s after the placement is made. A clear message for governments is that it is important to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities when developing, designing and implementing strategies for culturally appropriate services in child protection.

The second paper by Anthony McMahon, Lucinda Reck and Malcolm Walker reports on a study that seeks to define social, cultural and spiritual well-being indicators for Indigenous children in care. The study involved the participation of Indigenous child protection workers and foster carers in order to examine a series of strategic change indicators that address Indigenous concerns about the social, cultural and spiritual development of Indigenous children in care. The paper concludes that 'physical and emotional health exists only within a cultural community' that must be

given due regard in protective interventions by incorporating social, cultural and spiritual strategic change indicators.

It is timely that the comparative study concerning Looking After Children by Deirdre Cheers, Kathleen Kufeldt, Ross Klein and Scott Rideout is included in this Edition. The LAC system is currently used in a number of countries world-wide and this provides increasing opportunities for international research collaboration. This paper describes early results of one such collaborative effort between Canada and Australia. One of the strengths of the LAC system is the capacity to connect research, policy and practice. In practice LAC measures and enhances outcomes of care, while the aggregation of data collected via the use of LAC allows policy makers to assess current practices in order to monitor and measure the extent to which intended program goals are achieved. Though the results of this comparative study are preliminary, they are nevertheless important, and we look forward to the next stage of reporting on outcomes.

To conclude this Edition, we have included a paper by Patricia Hansen and Frank Ainsworth on a topic related to children who receive inadequate care and protection. This article addresses the ongoing problem of parent blaming which frequently surfaces in the process of working with disadvantaged families. As the authors state, 'Parent blaming is not a new phenomenon although currently it seems to be in vogue among practitioners ...'. It is important to remember that parents experiencing poverty, inadequate housing, unemployment, social isolation and prejudice can be doubly disadvantaged by situations in which workers attribute blame.

And, finally, our congratulations to Di O'Neil, OAM – the author of several articles published in this journal – who has been awarded the honour of being included in the Who's Who of Australian Women 2007 – a publication described as embracing 'the journey of dynamic and outstanding women who have significantly impacted Australian society'.

Jennifer Lehmann

States and Territories Update

NSW

The Department of Community Services has an Expression of Interest (EOI) in relation to the redevelopment of out-of-home care services. The EOI can be viewed on the Department's website <www.community.nsw.gov.au> (follow link to Out-of-home care funding rollout and EOI).

The website also contains a number of papers that are linked to the EOI relating to various models of care, i.e. foster care, intensive foster care, residential care, supported family group homes, wraparound services and family preservation/individual support.

Frank Ainsworth

Children Australia is a refereed journal – all papers submitted are peer reviewed to assess their suitability for publication. However, at the discretion of the editor, papers which have not been reviewed are published from time to time. In order to clarify which articles have been reviewed and which have not, we now include a symbol at the end of each article as follows: ■ = peer reviewed article □ = non-reviewed article