

contributions and their forbearance in reshaping their keynote addresses for publication in this special issue. Professor Alan Hayes, Dr Philip Mendes, Professor Cathy Humphreys, A/Professor Sue Green, A/Professor Eileen Baldry and Dr Patricia Hansen have provided expert commentary on individual papers and I thank them for bringing their insights to the issues and themes explored. Special thanks are due to the reviewers for their valued contribution.

Dr Elizabeth Fernandez  
Associate Professor  
School of Social Sciences and International Relations  
University of New South Wales

## REFERENCES

- Ben-Arieh, A. & Goerge, R. (2001) 'Beyond the numbers: How do we monitor the state of our children', *Children and Youth Service Review*, 23, 603-631.
- Bradshaw, J. & Barnes, H. (2007) 'An index of child wellbeing in the European Union', *Social Indicators Research*, 80(1), 133-177.
- Fernandez, E. (1996) *Significant harm: Unraveling child protection decisions and substitute care careers of children*, Avebury, England: Ashgate Publishing.
- Gibbons, J., Conroy, S. & Bell, C. (1995) *Operating the child protection system*, HMSO: London.
- Harding, A., Lloyd, R. & Greenwell, H. (2001) *Financial disadvantage in Australia – 1990 to 2000*, The Smith Family, <www.natsem.canberra.edu.au/pubs/poverty01.html>
- Lindsey, D. (2009) *Child poverty and inequality*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Parker, R.A., Ward, H., Jackson, S., Algate, J. & Wedge, P. (eds) (1992) *Looking After Children: Assessing outcomes in child care*, London: HMSO.
- Parton, N., Thorpe, D. & Wattam, C. (1997) *Child protection: Risk and the moral order*, Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan.
- Rycus, S. & Hughes, R.C. (2008) 'Assessing risk throughout the life of a child welfare case', in D. Lindsey & A. Shlonsky (eds), *Child welfare research: Advances for practice and policy*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 201-214.
- Vinson, T. (2007) *Dropping off the edge: The distribution of disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services/Catholic Social Services Australia.
- Waldfoegel, J. (1998) *The future of child protection: How to break the cycle of abuse and neglect*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge.
- Wood, J. (2008) *Report of the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in New South Wales*, November.
- Wulczyn, F., Barth, R.P., Yuan, Y.T., Jones-Harden, B. & Landsverk, J. (2005) *Beyond common sense: Child welfare, child well-being, and the evidence for policy reform*, Aldine Transaction, Piscataway, NJ.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Andrew McCallum, CEO  
Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)

Welcome to this special edition of *Children Australia* devoted to the keynote addresses and discussant responses at the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) conference in August 2008, ACWA being the peak body for Child and Family welfare agencies in NSW.

The conference is held every two years and is now widely regarded as a major event on the calendar for child and family practitioners, policy personnel, researchers and academics in Australasia. The 2008 conference was also a celebratory affair as it coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ACWA.

More than 1000 delegates from across Australia and internationally attended over the 3 days with the opportunity to choose from over 60 sessions including keynote addresses, workshops, papers and master classes. On the third day participants could also register for the *Management and Leadership Institute*, which focused on climate change and the community sector and took the form of a colloquium chaired by Dr. Jennifer Lehmann from La Trobe University Bendigo and included a number of recognised experts on the issue. The theme was chosen to bring to the fore a topic that, whilst high on the national and international agenda, has largely occupied the personal discourse within the context of the community services sector workplace.

The overall theme of the '08 conference was *Responding to Children, Young People and Families in a Civil Society*, broken down into four sub-themes, *Social Disadvantage, Safety & Wellbeing, Building Community Capacity and Out of Home Care*. The major theme and sub-themes were chosen in synergy with ACWA's strategic direction and in an effort to broaden the discussion around child protection as it is being played out nationally and internationally at the present time.

We were heartened by the eminence of the international and national speakers that accepted our invitation to present as their specific areas of expertise allowed for a tapestry of views seldom assembled at one conference. We were determined that our conversations would be broad and capture the larger vision of *child well-being*, as a necessary starting point if we are to truly tackle the vexed question of child protection at the highly publicised and politicised 'pointy end' that is statutory child protection. In the NSW context and the recently released *Wood Report*, the influence of these conference messages is already making itself felt.

The legacy of conferences such ACWA08 cannot be underestimated and to have this compendium is a bonus which will hopefully become a must read for anyone who aspires to improve the long-term circumstances of children and families in this country.

Our thanks to all the contributors – not only those included within these pages, but all who participated in ACWA08.

**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, a symbol is included at the end of each article as follows: ■ = peer reviewed article □ = non-reviewed article