

In this issue we celebrate the successful publication of the journal for another year - its 35<sup>th</sup> year of bringing research and practice news to subscribers - and herald some changes to publication arrangements. Tony Pitman, the CEO of OzChild, comments on both the past and the planning currently taking place for the future of the Journal, and I will confine myself to some brief remarks in this editorial. But as we move towards the end of another year, I would like to thank all the contributors to the Journal, our long-suffering reviewers, Lorraine for her excellent work and support, and Tony Pitman and the members of OzChild staff and Board for their support in reviewing the role and future of the Journal.



reports on research she undertook that investigated the educational status and needs of school-aged children in foster care. She used what is called a data-mining technique and found, not surprisingly given anecdotal evidence, that children faced significant barriers to both participation and educational attainment at school. Further, she concludes that changing the educational outcomes for these children relies on functionally successful linkages between child protection services, educational systems and the health care system. In this era of siloed disciplines and services, Clare's paper is a timely reminder of the integration that is required if we are to meet the needs of our vulnerable children.

Summer, of course, presents an array of activities and the potential for children to learn in the outdoor environment. Already I am seeing cricket practices and matches being played, families using the walking and cycling tracks, and hearing of plans for holidays for those with the means to afford a break away from home. But I also see a number of young and older people sitting about eating less than ideal food and I hear at night the effects of alcohol consumption as some younger folk wend their way homewards after drinking with friends. These behaviours reflect a few of the concerns about the wellbeing of our children, young people and their families held by health professionals. However, to achieve physical, social and emotional health, we need to think about an array of complex, inter-related factors and take a holistic approach to promoting wellbeing. This means thinking about what kids are breathing, hearing and seeing and what they are doing. It also means understanding their thinking and finding ways of offering opportunities that lead to their greater sense of wellbeing, having made choices that lead to this outcome. We are hoping that in 2011 we will begin the process of extending our coverage of topics and begin the tricky process of providing commentary to our readers that reflects the range of disciplinary knowledge that can be brought to bear when working with our clients.

But back to this issue, and Dr Nicola Taylor from New Zealand, who is a member of our Editorial Board, has generously provided a commentary on research being undertaken in Australia and New Zealand on impacts of parental relocation when children are subject to Family Court decisions. This is essential knowledge-building, investigative work for those involved in Family Law and begins to fill gaps in our understanding of the impacts of relocation and associated disputes.

This is followed by three papers relating to children in out-of-home care, the first being that of Clare Tilbury who

In the second paper, which relates to young people leaving care, Lee Tennent, Brian Jenkins and Elizabeth Fraser present selected findings from the Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian's third survey of children and young people in foster and kinship care conducted in Queensland in 2009. This survey attracted 2727 responses; this paper, however, focuses specifically on the views of 124 young people aged 16 to 18 years. A range of issues were identified for investigation including leaving care, health and wellbeing, education, placement histories, and perceptions of both current placements and the care system in general. The authors describe their findings, and suggest that most young people are optimistic about managing independent living, but anticipate needing a range of supports, especially financial assistance and help with finding accommodation. Over half of the young people in this study would prefer to continue living with their foster or kinship care family and more than three-quarters would like ongoing contact with the family after they leave care. This, of course, challenges our current system and emphasises, once again, the importance of continuity of relationships.

The third of these papers is by Susan Baidawi and Philip Mendes who discuss the transitioning of young people from care and substance abuse following a small scale study in which both young people and staff involved in their care were interviewed. Following the collection and analysis of data, Susan and Philip conclude that a range of individual, interpersonal and systematic factors contribute to problematic substance use. These factors include the use of self-medication to address past and present trauma, a lack of meaningful and stable relationships, and the systemic issues of state care policies and practices that lead to young people experiencing premature and unplanned exits from state care. These findings have significance for policy and practice which are discussed in the article.

A research-based paper by Jeanette Conrick and Thea Brown explores the experience of three women adoptees on becoming a parent. This pilot study focused on the nature of relationships with birth and adopted family, and with the participants' own children. It raises a number of important issues that a larger study will address in due course, I hope, as we have a limited understanding of the support needs, emotional development and changes that adopted women might require when entering parenthood for the first time. While these women had positive experiences as children, there are also a number of adoptees whose experiences are less advantageous and whose needs might be similar, but more urgent to address, thus an increased understanding of the issues is vital.

In the final article, Christelle Withers-Mayne discusses the relationship between the competencies required in the specialist field of child protection work and those highlighted in the construct of emotional intelligence. She suggests that there are parallels between competencies such as self-awareness and self-management, and the elements that make up emotional intelligence (EI), and proposes a model of EI that incorporates the competencies of child protection. The model is applicable to the workplace and can be used as a tool in reflective supervision to promote practice and professional development of staff.

In closing for the year, I would like to draw attention to an emerging study concerning women who have experienced out-of-home care and have engaged in tertiary education. One of the PhD students at La Trobe University's Rural Health School, Bendigo Campus, is in the process of recruiting women with tertiary qualifications, preferably from a University, who have been in care during their formative years. We already know that education is an area of development that is frequently disadvantaged for children in care, and we also know that to achieve a university degree requires tenacity, literacy prowess, financial and emotional support, and focus. Kathy Mendis is wanting to talk with women who have achieved this level of education to investigate what factors promoted their achievement. Her work will contribute to the body of knowledge we are slowly accumulating in relation to education of children and young people in residential and foster care situations. Her call for participants in the research is on page 44 of the journal.

*Children Australia* is also keen to hear of other research projects being undertaken across Australia and particularly encourages those seeking higher degrees to tell us of their work.

Jennifer Lehmann

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

### 'The changing face of out-of-home care models'

The June 2011 issue of *Children Australia* will focus on the above topic, including kith and kinship care.

Please submit commentary, research-based papers, evaluation-related papers and literature reviews to  
The Editor (j.lehmann@latrobe.edu.au) by 28 February 2011.

*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