

Children Australia

A proud past and an exciting future

Tony Pitman, CEO, OzChild

Children Australia is entering a new and exciting era in its development. After some 35 years as an academic and practice-oriented publication, the Journal is now set to continue this tradition, but also to broaden its scope in response to the increasing complexity of working with children, young people and their families and carers.

Over nearly four decades, we have enjoyed the support of a number of organisations, key activists in the field and practitioners. Established in 1976 under the title of *Australian Child and Family Welfare*, the Journal was published by the Children's Welfare Association in Victoria as the quarterly journal of the Child and Family Welfare Council of Australia and funded by the Children's Welfare Foundation. Publication of the journal coincided with a number of key policy changes through the 1970s, and in 1979, during the International Year of the Child, it addressed a range of themes that were paramount in the minds of academics and practitioners both in Australia and overseas. The 1980s saw new challenges in the sector, computerisation, the amalgamations of a range of children's agencies, and devolution of services from government in to the non-Government sector, together with major economic change. By the late 1980s, Australia was in recession and many in the sector were facing major organisational changes, particularly in Victoria under the Kennett government.

It was 1990 when the journal took the name *Children Australia* and much of the production work was managed by La Trobe University staff together with staff of the National Children's Bureau of Australia (NCBA), including Lorraine Redshaw. This arrangement continued through the shifting of organisational structures (including the NCBA) that resulted in OzChild: Children Australia Inc. being established in 1993. The Journal's strength continued to lie in the content being immediately useful to practitioners and the philosophy underpinning publication decisions continued to be one of inclusion of contributions. New authors were always encouraged and supported through additional editing assistance and this is a philosophy that continues to this day.

As we entered the new millennium, the contribution of the Journal continued with renewed attention to issues of child abuse, leaving care, impacts of systemic abuse and the range of other challenges that seem to continue unabated, in spite of our best efforts to counter them. Now, some ten years later, those challenges continue, but we are faced with more 'siloed' disciplinary efforts and the complexities that result from fragmentation of professional efforts and ideas. The lives of disadvantaged children and young people, and their families, are inherently more complex too.

OzChild: Children Australia Inc. and La Trobe University, School of Social Work and Social Policy, are acutely aware of the role that *Children Australia* plays at a national level. The Journal regularly goes to government departments, sometimes to the media and always to the many subscribers who are working directly in the child and family welfare sector. It is timely to review the important role that is being played by this publication as we enter the new decade and address, as we have always endeavoured to do, some of the challenges being faced at this time in our history.

Amongst the contextual changes for the journal will be attempts to reduce the disciplinary and service silos that need to cooperate to achieve healthy child development. Traditionally, as knowledge has grown in volume and needed organising, these silos have become increasingly reflected in the bureaucratic structures of government departments and academic institutions. While this has benefited research and the provision of data to the field, this development has further reinforced the silo effect, resulting in often separate, though growing, volumes of information. This has, in turn, contributed to the defining of practice models, sometimes more fragmented than one would have hoped. Credit goes, therefore, to some of the new legislation that is moving to embrace more holistic outcomes and bring together the collective 'best interests of the child'. This echoes the goal of the journal which will be to continue to provide researchers and practitioners with a widening and more integrated collection of life course perspectives around both protective and enhancement factors for children and families.

One other necessary change will be the outsourcing of the publishing process. With Lorraine now retiring, we lose a great amount of expertise around this process which, these days, has become very sophisticated as it moves into a variety of new options, particularly electronic, for distributing the valuable knowledge in articles. Copyright rules and options have also changed and new markets for this type of information have grown. With this in mind, we will be engaging Australian Academic Press, a publishing company that specialises in this sophisticated space, in anticipation of significantly increasing the value of the journal to a widening readership. These shifts in emphases will be gradual to ensure we retain the best and most useful content from the past four decades, while at the same time bringing new ways of strengthening both the readership and the contributions.

On behalf of those who have contributed so much to the success of this long-standing journal, I should like to thank you for your ongoing interest and support.