

Editorial

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This special celebratory issue of *Children Australia* marks a milestone in the commitment, tenacity and vision of many people across the last 40 years. Academics and professional practitioners, alike, have contributed their expertise and wisdom in a variety of roles – from writing and editing to financial backing and administrative excellence. Without this range of knowledge, and the determination to keep the journal alive and responsive to our changing world, we would not be in the strong and vibrant position we find ourselves in 2015.

There are, of course, too many people to acknowledge individually, but the longstanding belief of OzChild in the importance of *Children Australia*, and the energy and counsel of Cambridge University Press staff must be noted. Having entered the international arena, *Children Australia* is now supported by many people from across the globe and this Issue gives some indication of the generosity of colleagues, worldwide.

The basis for this Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) focused Issue was the idea of David Vicary who took on the mammoth task of going through the 40 years of archived journal issues to review the papers on this topic. He left the Bendigo Campus of La Trobe University with several very heavy boxes, all of which had been carefully collated some years ago by Lorraine Redshaw prior to her retirement as the Journal's administrative officer – a title that fails to do justice to her expertise over many years! In his searching of the archive, David would have discovered the shifts in content, design and mode of printing that has occurred across the years, but it was with an eye for the OOHC-related papers that he undertook his investigation and his paper on key observations in the OOHC sector that begins this Issue.

However, before plunging into the content for December, let me tell you a little about how I have constructed it. I have begun with an introduction to three of our new Editorial Consultants, all of whom have international expertise, and have already assisted us with developing or reviewing of papers. This is followed by two core sections of content: one

that contains David Vicary's "keynote" paper and addresses a tough question about OOHC – What will this sector look like in another 40 years' time? – and a second section which collects five of our current OOHC papers together.

For the first section of this Issue, it was impossible to think about the future without considering where we have come from over the last 40 years and a number of people who responded to our invitation to answer the "future" question have linked past experience and knowledge to their vision for what might lie ahead. I also had some ideas about how the future of OOHC might look and wrote a reflective paper which follows David's review. This has been responded to by Chris Goddard, Karen Broadley and Susan Hunt who have skillfully connected my observations and dreams for a better future with research and practice knowledge. With people from Australia and abroad responding to our question, David and I decided to bring together a number of short papers and comments, and I have placed this compilation next. The subsequent papers are commentaries in their own right and commence with John Diamond's experiences of The Mulberry Bush, a residential care facility in the UK. Also from the UK, Anna Gupta reflects on the past, present and future of children's experiences of out of home care. Howard Bath's ideas about the sector, more generally, follows. Freda Briggs AO and Susan Hunt write about the history of foster care as a specific OOHC option, and one



that is predominantly used in Australia now. Their concerns about current and future issues in foster care are pertinent to the question of the nature of developments we need to achieve if we are to have the range of options to offer families, children and young people in a sector that has tended to swing from one form of care to another without maintaining a thorough understanding of the variety of care contexts needed.

Sonia Jackson from the UK focuses the issue of education of children and young people in the OOHC sector which has been topical in Australia over the last few years and discusses one of the UK's most successful innovations – the idea of a Virtual School. This program is currently being evaluated and early results suggest this is a successful way of addressing a number of the key issues for children and young people in OOHC.

In India, Shraddha Kapoor writes about the recent past and current government policies in relation to OOHC and some of the programs being delivered in response to care needs, stressing that the family is seen as the foundational care unit for children and that policies are underpinned by this cultural position. Then, back in Australia, Frank Ainsworth gives attention to Therapeutic Residential Care which is a program that has been delivered now for some years, while Robyn Kemp from the UK discusses the impacts of using a social pedagogical approach in working with children and young people in the OOHC sector. This approach, I have noted, is now being taught at Victoria University, but it has been slow to be taken up in Australia.

The second section of this Issue is made up of four papers that also address aspects of OOHC in Australia. The first is by Laurel Downey, Shanelle Poppi and Jon Jago and returns

to the question of residential care and what works for the Queensland Catalyst agency. The second paper is by Damien Riggs and Ryan Ogilvy and, staying with the delivery of residential care services, looks at the experiences of professional carers working in Specialist Care Placements in South Australia. Michael Nycyk, Margaret Redsell and John Rigsby-Jones have provided a commentary on the value of external support services for children transitioning into foster care and discusses an example in which volunteering is used; while Nicole Peel and Alan Beckley raise the issue of what a “fair go” for children in out of home care might look like.

To conclude this Issue we have two books reviews, both of which critique books that are relevant to OOHC. The first, by Kathy Mendis is about preventing family violence which is a major issue in Australia at the present time and most children and young people in OOHC have been exposed to family violence of some form. The second review is by Di O’Neil OAM who discusses a recent publication that has collected together stories of children and young people growing up in Australia.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge all the dedicated staff and carers who have worked whole careers in the OOHC sector, but more especially the children, young people and their families, many of whom were not served well by the sector in the past and are not served well in the present either. We dream, with you, of better ways to meet your needs and keep you safe.

Rachael and I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the Journal in 2015, our reviewers, Editorial Consultants and our publishing colleagues. We wish you a joyful Christmas and New Year and look forward to your support in 2016.