

environment which places her in danger. On occasions where the person is at great risk staff have felt their duty is to protect the adolescent. Rather than contact the Police against her will other avenues of protection are generally sought.

The Department for Community Welfare has statutory authority to investigate a child's welfare, and, if necessary, can remove the child from the "at risk" or harmful environment. S.A.R.C. has no such authority and relies on other agencies to assist in protecting victims where necessary. In Perth, the State Government Department for Community Welfare opened its Child Sexual Abuse Unit in 1981, which is focusing on intrafamilial sexual assaults on children. S.A.R.C. has referred victims of incest to the Child Sexual Abuse Unit (C.S.A.U.) for protection, counselling and support.

CONCLUSION.

In the 36 months between October, 1978, and September, 1981, 234 people between 13 and 18 years were seen at the S.A.R.C. The procedures adopted in and some dilemmas arising from counselling and treating such victims are discussed above. The victims discussed in this paper are adolescents and so still developing their knowledge and experience of life. It is vital that negative attitudes and feelings engendered by a sexual assault are discussed and resolved if possible, so that the victim does not enter adult life with a heavy burden.

The functions of the S.A.R.C. are designed to help reduce stress for adolescents who have been sexually assaulted. By giving emotional support, protection where necessary plus medical care, the aim is to encourage the adolescent to resume a healthy physical, emotional, social and sexual development.

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SELF HELP PARENTS ANONYMOUS

Jeanette Uren, member, Parents Anonymous

In 1972 a group of women met to discuss the growing problem of parents under stress, especially the problem of child abuse. With the increase in single parent families, the escalating number of broken marriages and the disappearance of extended families, the pressure of parents was becoming greater. These women decided to form a group, a self-help group, non denominational and non profit making. Parents Anonymous was born.

A common complaint from people who seek help from Parents Anonymous is that many doctors, infant welfare sisters, or other professional workers do not have the understanding or experience to skilfully guide or refer parents who have trouble coping with their children, especially in times of stress. In most cases, particularly with doctors, it is the general practice to either underrate the problem or to hand out a prescription to "calm poor mum down". Also, to some parents, doctors and other professional workers represent an "authority" and this inhibits their ability to express themselves. They also fear that by admitting their parenting problems they are "failures" and fear that they may have their children taken from them. As parents are particularly vulnerable at such times, it would be helpful if professionals could be more perceptive of stress situations and their underlying causes, and be able to make parents more comfortable about talking out their problems and needs.

In cases of stress, such as family violence and/or breakup, long term support is vital. Parents need to be able to talk to someone, someone who cares and understands. They also need to have contact with other parents, not to feel that they are housebound, isolated or simply outcasts. It would be useful to parents if professionals were more aware of local support services (playgroups, counselling services, parent groups etc.) so that aid could be given to the parent more quickly.

Parents Anonymous is situated at 156 Collins Street, Melbourne. Here, people can come and discuss their problems with us in a relaxed and understanding atmosphere — we have been through similar situations ourselves. If necessary, we can guide parents to various other professional services or community support groups such as the Marriage Guidance Council, Council for the Single Mother and her Child, Legal Aid, etc.

Parents Anonymous deals with all aspects of child abuse, not just physical abuse as is widely thought. We believe that emotional abuse is the most prevalent form of abuse in our society, and also that this is the most damaging to children.

We have a 24 hour telephone counselling service, our volunteers are parents and have undergone training in counselling — one of our volunteers worked previously with Lifeline.

Parents are welcome to come to our group, which is held each Friday. Here, parents hold round table discussions, family problems are explored and members can help each other by making suggestions as to how these situations might be handled. Our group is guided by Ro Bailey, a founding member of Parents Anonymous who has recently completed training as a welfare worker. We also have a social worker who is with us part time, one of her duties is co-ordinating our volunteers and advising them if they encounter problems in their counselling work.

Other services include:—

Home visiting if, for any reason, a parent cannot come to us.

Short term emergency child care.

Personal counselling by appointment.

Visiting lecturers — we will give a talk to your group or organisation.

Most of all, however, we offer warmth and companionship, for after all we too are parents, and we know what it's like.



PARTICULAR CARE LAUNCHING

Professor Peter Boss launched the Bureau's Report of the National Survey into Children's Homes and Foster Care at St. John's Homes for Boys and Girls, on the 29th March, 1982.

A large crowd attended the launch, including interstate visitors from Queensland, New South Wales, Northern Territory and South Australia. Mr. Bob Burnett, from Canberra, represented the office of Child Care.

The pictures on this double page were taken by artist, Jeff Gilmour, who handled the layout and art work for the Report.

Professor Boss said that the Report represented a milestone

in Child Welfare research as it was the first time a study of this dimension had been attempted in Australia.

He congratulated those involved in the report, particularly the co-authors, Graeme Gregory and Norman Smith.

Graeme Gregory in responding said the production of the Report had been a strong team effort and thanked those who had been involved — he expressed the wish that the Report will provoke discussion and hopefully some modifications in the way we care for children separated from their families throughout Australia.



John Smith, Director and Stan Sellars, the supervisor of the Southern hostel Moorabin Vic.

Graeme Gregory, Frank Bier, St Johns and Exchange Student from Osaka Japan.



Graeme Gregory one of the authors of the report at the rostrum.

Graham Stout Project officer of the Mission of St James and St John (Melb) talking with Bob Flavell Gordon Homes for Boys and Girls.



Miss Willmot of the Myer Foundation (left) talking with Dr Williams, the President of the Childrens Bureau.



Terry Freeman (left) Director of Dalmar Homes N.S.W. Keith Henning, Asst. Superintendent Burnside Homes for Children, N.S.W. and Bob Gaff Director of St Marys Alice Springs (right).

Peter Boss, Professor of Social Work at the Monash University Melb. (left) John Edwards Chairman of the Publications Committee (centre) and Graeme Gregory (right).

