



## Editorial

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"Children, particularly welfare children, do not attract the trendy and politically sophisticated welfare activists" (Gorman, 1983).<sup>1</sup> It is unfortunate that work with those families and children who are functioning at a low level seems not to be the most sought after work for those working in the welfare field. As Gorman states "The area is full of stress and requires infinite patience, persistence and attention to detail" (1983).<sup>2</sup>

Whilst there is no doubt child welfare in all States requires more funds to adequately service those in need, the performance of the agencies and individuals providing current services needs to be continually evaluated. But evaluations and enquiries are useless unless appropriate action is taken upon the results.

One challenge which must be taken up and one which is addressed in the Lawrence Report on Paul Montcalm and in the article in this issue by Ainsworth is the training of practitioners working in the area of child welfare. This challenge must be addressed by educators, practitioners and administrators. There needs to be a clearer recognition of what skills and knowledge are needed for those working with low functioning families.

Administrators need to ensure that supervision and support is available to those who are working directly with families. Professionals in the welfare field are almost unique in that it is usual for the least experienced and skilled to work directly with these families as the more experienced move into administration and other indirect services. A person who requires specialist medical care or legal advice goes to the expert in that area. In the welfare field, often the expert is dealing with budget problems and the junior worker provides the service.

Obviously skilled people are needed in all welfare service roles, policy, administration, direct service. But perhaps until there is recognition in industrial awards for the importance of direct service, skilled practitioners will keep being lost from the 'front line'.

The challenges to child welfare today, the need for evaluation of welfare programmes and the need for an appropriate costing model, are among the issues addressed in this issue.

In providing perspectives on child care, Ainsworth demonstrates the seemingly repetitious nature of some issues, and warns of the danger of grasping onto false solutions because they appear simple.

Rainey and Murphy describe a preventive program which was undertaken to assist mothers cope with the expected stresses occurring with the first born baby.

Discussion papers on the Victorian Adoption Legislation Review Committee are also published. These papers raise issues that relate to the rights and responsibilities of all children and families, hence it seems important that they are disseminated for discussion.

1. Gorman, Anne, "Finding Out Why a Boy Died", *Australian Society*. September, 1983, Vol. 2.

2. op. cit.

*Margarita Frederico*