



# Editorial



The 1984 Federal Budget received a mixed reception from Welfare groups. The overall response appeared to be that whilst the budget moved in the right direction towards compensating the unemployed and families in poverty, it did not do enough. A spokesperson from VCOSS called it a 'trickle down budget' – those in poor economic circumstances having to wait until the benefits of economic recovery reached them.

Critics of the budget's effect on poor families have been told they live in 'cloud cuckoo land'. The whole debate reflects one its which ideals and values are opposed to economic pragmatism. Those working with families in poverty are only too aware that policies which gave greater rights to the poor are rarely seen as pragmatic or possessing economic realism.

Yet those working in child welfare agencies are well aware that a fair proportion of those 750,000 children and their families who live in poverty, come through their doors. These families have few resources to support them through crises. The crisis may merely be a change in the family – the birth of another child – but for families struggling to cope and with few economic resources this can be the crisis which leads the family to a welfare agency for assistance.

One of the difficulties for child welfare agencies is that these services can be absorbed by families who should not need them. That is, they are used by families whose major problem is poverty, not problems of the family system, or personal problems of individuals.

How can the trade-off between the negative effects of poverty on children and the need to protect the country's economy be quantified. Both statements are unchallengeable truths – yet somehow both statements are always juxtapositioned. The fact that a country's economy should be protecting the children of the country is somehow lost in the complex paths of economic theories, political pragmatism, vested interest, industrial and fiscal policies.

Yet in the long run, the Government is merely responding to its people. Those working in welfare need to focus more on education of the whole community regarding the effects of poverty. This can be done by publicizing the effects of poverty as seen by welfare agencies. Poor people still have little or no voice in the policy making process. But those working in welfare can continue to aim to change community attitudes so the rights of all children and all citizens are recognised as equal. If the community really wants it, economic theories and reality will fit with the ideals.

MARGARITA FREDERICO

## BOOK REVIEW EDITOR

**Ruth Stewart has resigned as Book Review Editor as from Summer 1984. The Editorial Committee would like to thank her for her work. As Editor I have been particularly appreciative of her work.**

**Ron Tiffen is our new Book Review Editor. Ron is Supervisor of Protective and Substitute Care Services, Outer Eastern Suburbs Region, with the Department of Community Welfare Services, Victoria.**

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