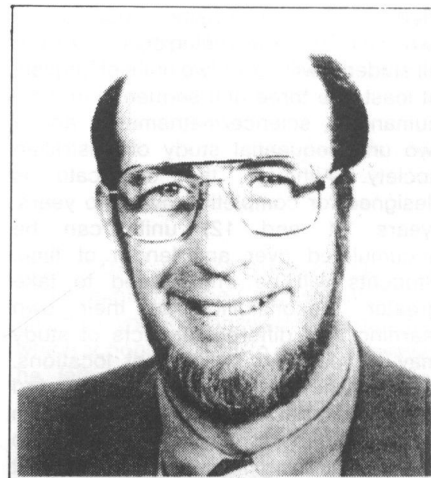




## Guest Editorial — Lloyd Owen

ACTING REGIONAL MANAGER, OUTER  
EASTERN SUBURBS REGION,  
COMMUNITY SERVICES VICTORIA



International Youth Year 1985 has now given way to the International Year of Peace. It is fitting therefore that some attention is given in this issue of Australian Child and Family Welfare to peace as the last of the IYY themes. This follows articles in the two previous issues on the themes of development and participation. Assurance of freedom from exploitation and destructive conflict remains an elusive state for many in the global community. When this awareness is added to immediate barriers to personal well-being, recognition or achievement in education, employment or social life, it is not hard to elicit concern, anxiety, sometimes fatalistic acceptance and sometimes despair among the young people of 1986. From time to time the despair spills over into anger and aggression with further potential for destructive consequences. The hope for the Year of Peace is that channels for constructive energy will be opened up and that human will, intellect and passion will make headway toward goals of peaceful co-existence and co-operation.

The immediate future should keep issues related to youth in fairly high profile. Although the proportion of young people in the total population is expected to decline up to the year 2001, the peak of a demographic bulge is now with the 15 year-olds. As they pass through their mid and late teens, the community capacity to accommodate their growing up will be simply quantitatively stretched. This post compulsory school age population will be pressing on the labour market, further education, income security, health and human relationships activities, recreation facilities and, as time goes on the youth accommodation field and community services generally. This batch of post-war baby boomer's babies will be testing the coping capacities of those around them and quite a few new schemes and approaches which are just moving into place.

In Victoria the Youth Guarantee Information Service has drawn attention to the significant decline in base level job opportunities available to 15-19 year olds. This gradual trend going back over the past two decades is seen as resulting from factors including economic recession; social attitude changes, such as a shift in preference toward higher qualifications and maturity; structural changes, such as the decline in manufacturing industries; and, technological change. This decline is exemplified by the fact that if the proportion of teenage employment had remained constant in State and Federal Public Services between 1971 and 1981, it would have amounted to an additional 50,000 jobs in 1981, (Bureau of Labour Market Research Report on Youth Employment Patterns 1985). The Victorian Public Service in an effort to counter this trend is seeking to promote, job redesign, traineeships, additional apprenticeships, recruitment quotas for young people and an examination of age barriers. Schemes designed to address other needs such as voluntary early retirement and permanent part time employment may also improve youth access to positions in this area of employment.

Again in Victoria, the implementation of new structures in education flowing from the Ministerial Review of Post-compulsory Schooling released in May 1985, (Blackburn Report) will result in the new Victorian Certificate of Education being introduced in 1987. It should be fully operational as a replacement for all other forms of year 12 study throughout the state by 1990. A major thrust of the Blackburn strategy is to increase participation of young people aged 15 to 19 in post compulsory education. There is also an endeavour to facilitate complementary work study options. The Victorian Certificate of Education will represent successful completion of 24 units of semester length including sequential units, common studies and other studies.

## BOOK REVIEW

28

**Editor:** Margarita Frederico

**Associate Editors:**

Annette Hourigan

Cliff Picton

**Chairman The Children's Bureau of  
Aust. Inc. Publications Committee**

John Edwards

**Subscriptions:** Lee Richmond

**Book Review Editor:**

Ron Tiffen

**Secretary:** Dorethea Wood

**The Children's Bureau of Australia  
Inc. Publications Committee**

John Edwards, Dip. Y.L., B.A.,  
B.S.W. (Hons.)

Margarita Frederico, B.A.,  
Dip. Soc. Stud., M.S.W., M.B.A.

Annette Hourigan, B.A.,  
Dip. Soc. Stud.

Denis Oakley, B.A.,  
Dip. Soc. Stud.

Lloyd Owen, B.A.,  
Dip. Soc. Stud., M. Soc. Wk.

Cliff Picton, B.A.,  
Cert. Soc. Stud.

Ron Tiffen, B.A.,  
Dip. Soc. Stud.

Fields of study comprising sequences of two or more units are being developed and all students will cover two units of English, at least one three unit sequence in arts/humanities, science/mathematics and a two unit sequential study of Australian society. Although the certificate is designed for completion over two years, (years 11 and 12) units can be accumulated over any length of time. Students will be encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning and different aspects of study may be pursued in different locations. Attendance will relate to contracted sessions and student input into curriculum is envisaged through responses to courses, learning modes and assessment practices.

The Australian Government as part of its responsibility for income security is pursuing a plan over three years to rationalise the existing education allowances and unemployment benefits into an age related youth income support system. By January 1988 common rates of allowance will be established for 16-17 year olds eligible for education allowances or unemployment benefits. A common rate will also be established for 18-20 year olds. Indexation will be applied to the 16-17 allowance in 1988 and it will follow for the 18-20 age group in the following year. A special common allowance for homeless youth under 18 was to be introduced in January 1987. A recent decision by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal appears to have resulted in the legislation for this type of benefit

being brought forward. It is proposed that an allowance of \$73.28 per week will be paid to young people who are homeless and either receiving unemployment benefits or continuing with study after their compulsory schooling has finished. (The Age 22/3/86).

Underlying these efforts, apart from the need to make the best use of available resources, is a recognition that unemployment, ignorance in a complex world and poverty can debilitate individuals and crush communities.

There is also some recognition that it is often a sense of injustice or inequity which creates conditions for destructive human conflict. Hopefully it is not just fear of the disenchanting which leads us to strive for better ways of doing things, humanitarian outcomes and altruistic objectives appear to the writer to be capacities of the human condition worth cultivating. In this vein Peter Hollingworth's address to the Children's Bureau (published in this issue) concerning Children and Poverty provides considerable food for thought and action. Dilemmas abound in the business of legislating for a just society and administering the law. One topical subject of some significance to young people concerns alcohol use including the issue of "underage drinking". Considerable opportunity for discussion and action has risen from the sweeping review of licencing conditions in Victoria contained in the Nieuwenhuysen Report. Also as part of the National Campaign Against Drug Abuse initiated in the Special Premiers' Conference of April 1985, alcohol and

drug resource workers are now being appointed to Health Regions to assist in developing strategies at regional and local level. The campaign strategy adopted does appear to reflect some lessons learned from history concerning the shortcomings of relying simply on legal proscriptions to regulate human behaviour. Enforcibility is a major issue in the administration of the law as is congruence with prevailing social attitudes. The multiple emphasis therefore on education within a broader health and community context, practical help for the abuser in difficulty, and concerted effort to expose those who traffic is therefore welcome.

The writer has had the good fortune to be assigned in recent weeks to the management of one of the regions of the new state department, Community Services Victoria. He has therefore rapidly come to grips with the wide range of community services spanning the eight local government areas involved. Initial impressions are very encouraging in respect to the extent to which the spectrum and continuum of services for families their children and young people are developing. Participation of non government, local government, state and federal agencies in local consultative mechanisms is highly significant. The challenge of working at the integration of a range of categorical services and some universal ones in a community human service context is exciting. The potential for sharing and cross fertilising the positive features of such an array of backgrounds is perhaps the most exciting feature of all. Residential services have sometimes in the past been used to provide expedient and sometimes inadequate solutions for social problems. It is clear that in some situations residential services are necessary and appropriate, where this is so the form must relate to the needs of the client, facilitate healthy independence and a satisfying lifestyle. One development likely to be of interest to readers of this journal is the establishment of a working group reporting to the Ministers of Community Services, Education and Health to examine a range of issues relating to the provision of specialist local child and family services. These refer to statewide, regional and local services aiding children and adolescents, 0-18 years, with particular additional needs and their families. The particular additional needs groups to be considered are those children and adolescents who have developmental delay, disturbance or disability of physical, sensory, language, cognitive, emotional or social development. Consultation is being arranged at the Regional level of the three Victorian Government Departments involved.

