

Editorial

Family and child welfare appears once again to have taken a back seat to national economics, fringe benefits taxes and getting the economy right. No one questions that promotion and maintenance of family and child welfare have high costs and that a strong economy is the surest way to have these needs met. But what is happening to those in need whilst the economy is getting back on the track? There is a real danger that preventative programmes will be sacrificed as cost cutting measures are called for, and once again children most vulnerable in the community will not get the support they require.

During the year the Australian Financial Review published an editorial expressing concern about child abuse. This followed two horrific and widely publicised cases of child abuse in New South Wales. It was of interest that the financial press would turn its attention to the plight of children. However, what was not addressed was the fact that welfare must be given priority when considering the needs of the com-

munity and cannot be treated as a luxury the community can only afford when the economy is strong. If child abuse is to be addressed, more attention needs to be given to programmes which not only respond to the crises but focus on prevention research and training to develop and improve effective services in this area. Programmes need adequate funding and there needs to be more research moneys available to build a greater knowledge base of the needs and effective programmes for children and families. It is easier (albeit only relatively) to receive funding for industrial research than research into the needs of children and families.

The International Year of Youth has done noticeably little to improve the situation of young people in the community. They still form the highest cohort of unemployed and the well publicised priority one scheme has been shown to be a failure. The discrepancy between the verbalised values of our society and the actual values which can be inferred from actual

programmes appears to be growing. Until more funding is directed to the welfare of children, youth and families this dichotomy will remain and should be of concern to all.

In this issue we focus on knowledge and practice in foster care. Anthony Maluccio and James Whittaker, both of whom have researched and written extensively in the child welfare area, explore the concept of parental involvement in permanency planning and consider practice implications for encouraging this to occur. Frank Ainsworth also addresses this issue looking particularly at the role of child care staff. Peter Mertin and Richard Baxter consider some of the dynamics involvement in the successful or unsuccessful foster care placement. Complementary to the articles on direct practice issues is Julie Martin's description of developing a computerised information system in a multi-faceted family and child welfare agency.

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