

# BOOK REVIEW

## Review of "FAMILY DAY CARE IN AUSTRALIA"

(With comparison to Family Day Care in England, Sweden and Denmark) by Mary Robertson.

Reviewed by  
A. & D. Williams

Family Day Care was introduced to Victorian in 1971 by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and by 1984 had grown to 63 services. In an attempt to solve the problem of inadequate child care facilities, within the Shire of Eltham family day care was proposed and in 1974 Mrs. Mary Robertson was appointed as a part time co-ordinator. It was the fourth scheme to be started in Victoria and by 1977 was in full swing. It received funding with seven other municipal programmes from the Federal Government in 1975. Mrs. Mary Robertson has continued as the co-ordinator and is the most experienced and longest practising person in Family Day Care in Victoria. She is admirably suited to make this concise review of Family Day Care in Australia and as she received sponsorship for a trip to England, Sweden and Denmark from the Creswick Founda-

tion in 1983, to make a comparative study with these countries.

Family Day Care programmes exist in overseas countries because of similar problems to Australia, namely an increasing number of families needing help with child rearing. Though in some instances group day care seems to be the preferred option, family day care is increasingly seen to provide care which is more flexible, especially for infants.

It may be because in the Scandinavian countries, the schemes are so much older and better recognition and funding is given by the governments, many of the problems that are still faced in Australia have been solved. However an important, though secondary role of family day care, is an intervention one, providing the link to many other services. Mary Robertson recognizes the negative as well as the positive features of the schemes in each country and feels that in some areas e.g. primary prevention, the overseas programmes lack the strength and emphasis found in Australia.

In her review Mrs. Robertson lists some of the strengths and weaknesses of this service as currently conducted in Australia. This is an important aspect of her book. She highlights the lack of understanding at municipal level, inadequate monitoring by the Office Child Care, the lack of consultancy available to the co-ordinators and restricted funding.

Mary Robertson, who has always been concerned for quality of care for young children and meeting their needs and those of their families, points out that family day care has made possible a high quality of care.

The book is well written, short (63 pages) and easy to read. It comes at a time when Family Day Care is growing rapidly in Australia and is being more widely accepted by Government and the Community. There is a vital need to look carefully at what we are doing through it for young children and their families.

In his forward, Dr. Howard Williams commends this book to all concerned with health, education and welfare of young children. We the reviewers of this book agree.

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