



Editorial

We begin with an assumption that society has an obligation to provide a safe, supportive and responsive environment for growing children and other vulnerable members. The articles in this issue demonstrate an acceptance of such an obligation, at least in part, by each of the three spheres of government in Australia (Commonwealth, State and Local), by non-government service providers, by paid workers and by volunteers.

In his book *Children and Families in the Social Environment*, Garbarino points to ways of minimising socio-cultural risk and maximising socio-cultural opportunity. The spectrum of services described by practitioners in this issue appear to be thoroughly engaged in such a task. Also apparent is the extent to which partnerships have developed in resourcing and delivering services. By virtue of its close proximity to home for most people, local government should be better placed to see needs. Through its land use responsibilities, it can be more aware than others of the physical, economic, environmental and social amenities in the council area. The planning and coordinating possibilities which follow are being taken up by many local authorities. Determining relative roles and responsibilities and the ever-present question of resourcing demands much effort, goodwill and commitment to seeing that needed services are provided. In her article in this issue Jenny Wills cogently draws attention to many of the issues involved.

The family support and family aide services described are examples of effort, which, in addition to ameliorating painful stresses and helping people to help themselves, carry some hope of reducing the social and economic costs of dysfunctional and damaging family situations. A commonwealth and state subsidised service providing for family counselling, family aides and financial counselling has now been operating for some time. Anecdotal evidence points to the worth of these services and their cost effectiveness. The articles by Margaret Matters and Patricia Briggs point to some areas where further research effort might fruitfully be applied.

Many events and programs in recent years have shown that people with disabilities can move much further toward self reliance and community participation. Jane Picton describes a delightful project where a garden centre is clearly enhancing opportunity and self-help in a very positive way.

Also in this issue, Chris Goddard has furnished us with food for thought with an international flavor, in his reflective column *Not the Last Word: Point and Counter-point*. His visit to the seventh International Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect in Brazil last year provided the backdrop for these thoughts on wealth and poverty.

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