



Editorial

The 1990's are with us and what a challenging decade it appears to be as we move toward the 21st century. With this volume the journal has adopted a new title and the Bureau is undergoing some expansion. This will be further marked by a special edition in Volume 15, No. 2, which will focus on the "State of Australia's Children". Contributions have been requested, and some are on the way, from Commonwealth and State political leaders and eminent contributors and advocates for the well being of Australia's children.

It is vital this year also, to attend to the efforts of the United Nations. The product of drafting work, which commenced in 1979, has been released in the form of a Convention on the Rights of the Child. Thirty years after the Declaration of the Rights of the Child and a decade beyond the International Year of the Child, the nations of the world are now invited to formally signify their agreement to achieving and maintaining specified rights for children.

As well this year has been designated, the International Year of Literacy by the United Nations. Among the activities taking place, in connection with this special focus, there are sure to be many indicators of the long term value of positive learning environments, through the various childhood phases. The report "No Single Measure" written by Rosie Wickert was released toward the end of last year. It details a study involving 1500 adults across Australia, whose skills in document literacy, prose literacy and quantitative literacy were tested with a series of graded tasks. The study was funded by the Commonwealth Government through the Department of Employment, Education and Training as part of the Adult Literacy Campaign. Among the factors seen to effect proficiency in the different areas of literacy defined in the study, were education, particularly for prose literacy. The number of reading materials in the home during childhood was seen to be important for documentary and quantitative literacy. The opportunity to practice skills emerged as a most significant factor (current literacy practice) pointing to the importance of the daily round to skills acquisition and atrophy. All the more reason to ask about the conditions of everyday life for the children of Australia and the rest of the world. The daily news barrage, provides all too often reminders of sophisticated inhumanity and the ease with

which the needs and interests of children can be overlooked, ignored or crushed by adults pursuing political, social and economic aspirations or having trouble settling their differences.

In this issue the journal's contributors provide us, as usual, with information about some notable activity in Australia, some much needed research effort in the field and some challenges for ongoing action both at home and abroad.

The contribution of Len Tierney and Meryl McDowell serves as a reminder to the community, of the many issues involved in achieving an adequate child welfare system, when the state is called into the parenting role. This research provides some pointers to improved practice, some sense of the difficulties involved in system change and some more questions to be researched. Given our earlier comments on the importance of learning in early childhood and the damaging effect on children of inadequate adult conflict resolution, Phillip Slee's article on children's conflict resolution styles is timely and points to the importance of this topic for future generations. Students and practitioners in child protection will welcome Chris Goddard's article on Victoria's Fogarty Report.

The ongoing evaluation and refinement of practice in response to instances of child abuse and neglect remains an urgent and ongoing concern. In concert with a report on some interesting prospective research in intercountry adoption in New South Wales, Brian English has furnished readers with a remarkably detailed account of the historical and demographic context of adoption in general.

I am sure that all of these articles will be welcomed by practitioners, consumers, students and supporters of good child and family welfare practice, throughout Australia. In the book reviews we touch base with family therapy. As usual, point and counterpoint, with a spotlight searching for children in history, stretches one's mind across human values and the global context.

LLOYD OWEN