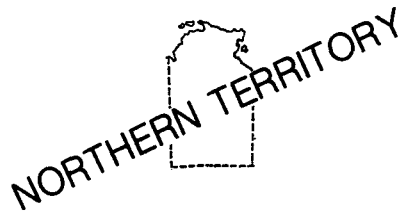


NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATES



Mr. W. Hughes

At a recent meeting of the Child and Family Welfare Council of Australia, Mr. Bill Hughes, a member of the Council and also a committee member of the Journal, took the opportunity of talking to State representatives about recent events and developments in their respective States.



Mr. Bob Gaff is the Superintendent of St. Mary's Child and Family Welfare Service in Alice Springs, N.T. —

Tracy still news

"I think the major news in child care in the Territory has its basis in the Christmas cyclone at Darwin and the aftermath in terms of destroying facilities. The voluntary sector and the statutory bodies in Darwin still have not completely resolved what they would like to rebuild and what sort of care they think is appropriate at this stage. This has led to some demand for re-assessment of the situation. The United Church lost about 50 per cent of its residential care facilities and are, I think, going through a process of trying to re-assess the priorities in the way child and family welfare services ought to be offered. A decision was made early after the cyclone, that the residential correctional establishment "Essington House" would not be rebuilt in its original form. This has led to a period of time when the remand children and the like have had to be cared for in some other community based facility. I understand, a revision of this decision has been made and some type of facility will be restored on the "Essington House" site.

Residential in Alice

In Alice Springs there is under construction a residential child care facility by the Department. It is unclear at this stage as to the exact

use of this facility. Its original concept included the rendering of the majority of services to a smallish community, like Alice Springs, in the one building. This was not very favourably received by Child Welfare and Social Workers in Alice Springs. The Voluntary sector in Alice Springs has developed to a point where all care is rendered in cottage homes. There are a number of service programmes for children in their own situation. The difficulty still remains with the Departmental subsidies or financial assistance to these bases — it still tends to be based on children in care, rather than preventive programmes, although the present feeling is that preventive programmes should be given more serious consideration.

From St. Mary's point of view, we have endeavoured to struggle with the recommendations made by Lyn Reilly of the University of Queensland in his assessment and report on St. Mary's. The Council has looked at its role in light of this report, the staff have looked at their role and the role that they see the Council playing in light of this report. Efforts are being made to involve the client population in some type of decision making process.

All aboriginals

Although it needs to be realised that as all our children at present are of aboriginal descent, we do have cultural background problems in decision-making, and this process of discussion and liaison has tended to be bogged down on the communication problems between aboriginals and whites. This has resulted in the last couple of years in a large load on our cottage parents, these being the people the families of the children identify most easily with, so that when a child moves out of care we tend to have an increase in the load on cottage mothers, rather than a decrease.

Isolation a major problem

One of our major problems in relation to what is the standard in the bigger cities and towns of the more closely populated States, is one of isolation. It comes in many guises, right from the problem of no advisory professional help, i.e. no psychologists or psychiatrists and their backup services. These are available from time to time; in 1975 we did have a residential psychologist and psychiatrist in Alice Springs and services tended to be developed around these men, but this year they have gone elsewhere, and we have only visiting psychiatrists and psychologists on a two or three day a month basis, which obviously doesn't allow you to develop any, or very little, liaison. Also we have isolation in the terms of getting men. Men, manpower, staff, materials, all tend to be a little more difficult to get on site.

The Alice Spring's community like so many others is often slow to accept people who are living outside the norm of the community, and consequently, many of these children can be seen to be developing at a considerable disadvantage if they want to be part of that Alice Springs community. Therefore, we are faced with a situation where we can see that we are developing a generation of children who are going to be socially disadvantaged by their lack of education and socialisation."



Bill Couch reports

Mr Bill Couch is the Director of Residential Services for the Church of England in Western Australia. —

Funds for Alternatives

Under the scheme introduced through the interim committee of the Children's Commission last year, Western Australia received funds for two projects as alternatives to residential child care. At the State level, the State Department of Community Welfare, shortly after decisions were made as to which programmes in Western Australia would be funded, initiated a programme of their own for the funding of projects put forward by the voluntary agencies — by individual voluntary agencies — which had been unsuccessful in submission to the interim committee of the Children's Commission. As a result, there are now three programmes in Western Australia that will receive funds from the State over the next three years, to explore and develop services as alternatives to Residential Child Care. One of these



Family Centre provides an outlet for young mothers.

Family Centre

programmes is called the "Family Centre" and is being developed by the Anglican Church through its Health and Welfare Services. The basic thrust here has been to place an experienced Social Worker in a Housing Commission Estate in rented premises in the initial stages through the existing parish network in that area. There is support provided for that person as well. The social work is developed in a number of low-key activities to attract mums and their families to a family centre. The current activities include a "Keep Fit" class, a play group for young children and informal group discussions and counselling over the inevitable cup of coffee in the mornings and more and more encouragement is being given for whole families to become involved in this project and the development of evening activities as well. The funding the Anglican Church receives for this programme will enable them to employ two indigenous leaders and these, it is hoped, will enable that Social Worker and her family centre to reach further back into that Housing Commission Estate and involve far more people.

Methodists

Another programme being developed by the Methodist Church is looking at how they can use their church structure involving a number of circuits. The thrust of this programme is to discover just what resources the Methodist Church can bring together from their circuit base. It is hoped that amongst Methodist worshippers and supporters of the Church work, they will find voluntary workers and will be able to find foster parents and will be able to find a number of people in the community who have an interest in their services and are prepared to become more deeply involved.



Hopefully, these people will be able to support families that are considered to be at risk back in the community centre, thereby preventing the need sometimes for the children to come into residential care. The contact person for the work being undertaken by the Methodist Church is Mr. Les Smith, the Director of Methodist Children's Homes in Western Australia, William Street, Perth. In the case of the Anglican programme, the contact person would be Arch-Deacon Michael Challon, who is the Director of Field Services for Anglican Health and Welfare Services, 52 Mount Street, Perth.

third grant

The third grant went to a project in North Perth working with adolescent girls. The foundation director of Community Services Training College, Miss Patrice Cook, has for a long time been very much involved in this project, together with a religious nursing Sister. Miss Patrice Cook's major work over the last 18 months now has been the development of the Community Services Training College. This college was established at the beginning of 1975 to be the training institution in Western Australia for Child Care Workers. Funds came from the State Government through the Department of Community Welfare for the establishment of the College, but plans are being worked on now for the College to become an independent and autonomous unit, hopefully with C.A.E. status. In its first year of operation, the College provided a basic group worker course, for the training of child care workers, both from the voluntary sector and for the Department of Community Welfare Institutions. A special part-time course was also developed for teachers working in institutional settings, and plans are being made now to develop another special part-time course for administrators of institutions."



Marie Bennett reports

Ms. Marie Bennett is the Matron of Warilda Reception and Assessment Centre, Department of Children's Services, Queensland. —

Adoption Conference

"Items on the Queensland scene that may be of interest to others are:

Following the Adoption Conference in Sydney, there was a workshop on adoption held in Brisbane, and following this, different groups are doing further work on adoption and I believe they are to meet again towards the end of the year.

Annual Report

Points of interest in the recent Annual Report by the Department of Children's Services are, that there's been a marked decrease in the number of children in institutions; there has been an increase in the number of children in foster homes; the number of children actually admitted to care, either voluntarily or through the courts, has also decreased and there's been an interesting change in the number of children who have actually come into care through the court — the previous year there was a 28% increase, whereas this year there has only been .71%.

Family Group Homes

There have been three family group homes opened during the last financial year — one at Toowoomba, at Drayton, one at Mackay and one at Beaudesert. These are conducted by various churches, Methodist, Church of Christ and

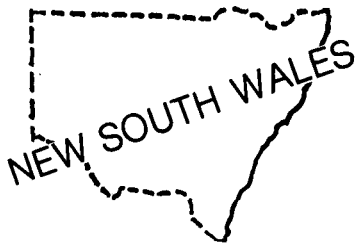
Baptist. Last month, the Queensland Foster Parent's Association held their first conference, which they felt was quite a success and they really are quite a keen group and interested to do the best for the children in their care. Another thing of interest is that the Foster Parents' Association has been assisting the Department of Children's Services in recruitment programmes for foster parents. Maybe this is something towards the increase in children in foster homes.

Boonah Opening

There has also been an opening of a special home at Boonah, some miles out of Brisbane, called "The Outlook". This is conducted by the Department of Children's Services. Their intention is to provide more individual care, there is a high staff-to-children ratio and it's really specialised care. Their official aim is that "The Outlook" has been established to meet a specific need in the treatment of children which is currently unmet by existing facilities. This need is for a specific treatment programme for boys in the 10-14 years age group, who do not respond to the custodial or family care model of management. Its purpose is seen, therefore, as complimentary to the purposes of existing facilities."

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Ray Jenkins reports

Mr. Ray Jenkins is Superintendent of the Burnside Homes for Children, N.S.W. —

Child Care Week

“Regarding New South Wales, you’ve probably seen the literature on our Child Care Week in New South Wales — 19th to 26th September. This is organised by a Child Care Week Committee which is elected at a public meeting each year. It is not run exclusively by the Association of Child Caring Agencies, although that body and the Department of Youth and Community Services are well represented.

Representative

Another item of news is that the Department of Youth and Community Services, in May this year, approached the Association of Child Caring Agencies to see if there was a representative who would work with the Department on some research. The person chosen was Keith Henning, Deputy-Superintendent at Burnside. The Burnside board agreed to Keith being seconded to the Department for four days a week, from June till the end of November, and the Department is funding this — it is paying Keith’s salary for that period. Keith is working with Mrs. Helen Barrow, who is one of two research officers in the Department. She is a Social Worker and they are researching the North-Western region of Sydney — that’s the Youth and Community Services Department’s region. It begins in one of the western suburbs

and extends to Katoomba in the west and is bounded by Penrith and Richmond. Now they are visiting all children’s homes and allied agencies twice, both voluntary and statutory, and their purpose is to get a clear, detailed picture of the child care facilities available, that is, the amount of accommodation, the actual numbers of children in care and the number of vacancies, and what facilities the homes have and what other sorts of children they would be prepared to take in; e.g. handicapped children — physically and mentally handicapped. In the process, of course, they are finding out what the gaps are. Some of the homes could say “Well, we can see a need for such and such, but we haven’t got the money, or we haven’t got the facilities.” Now, this is leading up to the question of what the voluntary agencies think of the possibility of a fee for service. That is, the voluntaries caring for State wards on a fee for service basis, and then, if so, what sort of contract they would be interested in. I must point out that with rare exceptions, State wards in New South Wales are cared for by the Department and not by voluntary agencies. I haven’t got actual figures about wards, but the majority of State wards are in foster care and there are roughly around 1,000 in institutions — that is, Government institutions, and more than half of those have special problems, physical and mental handicaps, etc.

Government support

It might be of interest to mention that, in New South Wales, there is no assistance from the Government, apart from the provisions under Section 27A of the Child Welfare Act, whereby the Government currently pays \$12.50 per child per week to a voluntary agency caring for children whose parent or guardian pays nothing. This means, if the parent pays us \$1 per week, we get nothing from the Government. The Association of Child Caring

Agencies has asked the Department that this \$12.50 be increased to \$35 per week. It’s hard to be optimistic of course, in view of the financial situation prevailing generally.

Secretariat

A third item of interest is that the New South Wales Association of Child Caring Agencies has written to the Department of Youth and Community Services, seeking funding for a Secretariat. We’ve submitted an estimated budget of about \$20,000 for a full-time secretary and an office secretary to assist. Privately, we feel that, if we can possibly get \$5,000-\$6,000 from the Government, we would be able to employ, say, a full-time typist-secretary to do the actual office work and continue with an honorary secretary to give the lead. We are seeking this at this stage, because we feel it’s time we did and this has been prompted also because Gordon Hardy is reducing his activities and is happy to bow out of this as soon as we can get a paid person to do the job. We will also have to aim at obtaining financial help from voluntary sources.”



Ross Walker reports

Mr. Ross Walker is the Director of Anglican Welfare Services for the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn. —

Outreach

“In the A.C.T. an organisation named “Outreach” Incorporated

was established in 1967, basically to care for children presenting themselves before the court, and the Magistrate at the time was dissatisfied with the alternatives facing him. After resigning from the bench, he took the initiative and established "Outreach" to provide specialised accommodation for these children, who had been before the court or who were at risk, and initially a property was leased from the Department of Capital Territory. Ultimately funds were raised to buy one in their own name.

Independent Units

Initially, these homes operated as independent units — one for boys, one for girls. At a time of shortage of children, one home was closed and boys and girls were amalgamated in the one place. This experiment worked very successfully, and, with the re-opening of the second home of "Outreach" recently — following this closure — it has been decided that the policy would be always to have children of both sexes in each of the places. It seems to make them much more normal and much more manageable. "Outreach" did have some organisational and financial problems but, as a result of a public appeal late last year, funds are in a much healthier position. The Committee of "Outreach" has been involved in trying to develop special programmes for the sort of children presented to them. Discussions have been held with school counsellors, psychologists and with the educational clinics and we hope to extend the type of remedial services that can be offered alongside our simple domiciliary care.

Government Representative

Another important feature is that we have representation from the Government on the Management Committee.

In the last 12-18 months, "Outreach" has come under the control of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn, and one of the moves which prompted this was

that the initiator, Mr. Clarrie Hermes, was to be posted to London and so that the continuing work could be guaranteed, he approached the church, as many of the people who were behind the establishment of "Outreach" were from the Anglican Church, and the Diocese agreed just over twelve months ago to accept the challenge and undertake the continuation of the "Outreach" programme. In the A.C.T. the Department of Capital Territory Welfare Branch pays for the actual cost of the children that they place in care. In the N.S.W. area the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn operate three children's homes — a congregate care home in Goulburn, known as St. Xavier's; on a farm situation near Tumbarumba, "Bungarimble" Farm Home for Boys, and in Wagga a small family group home called "Birralelee". Because of a lack of children for the "Birralelee" home and the fact that our House Parents moved interstate, it has been decided to defer a decision on the use of "Birralelee" for six months. This will give opportunity for review as to the future of this children's home which was only opened in 1971. It is expected that in some form or another the "Birralelee" Children's Home will continue to serve the needs of children."



The Knox Report released

Mr Walter Jona, M.P., Assistant Minister of Health, has recently released the first report of the Knox Early Childhood Development Complex compiled by research sociologist, Ms. Yoland Wadsworth.

Following acceptance by the Victorian Government of the main recommendations of the Report of

the Consultative Council on Pre-School Child Development, the Early Childhood Development Complex at Knox was established as a pilot project to enable difficulties in implementation of the basic conceptual ideas to be assessed.

Ms. Wadsworth was appointed to "assess and evaluate the services provided (by the Early Childhood Development Complex) as to whether or not they meet community needs".

Mr Jona said, "One of the considerations in compiling the report was that as information about community needs would necessarily be varied and descriptive, it was recognized that traditional research methods alone would leave out the complexity of the human element. This report, therefore, represents an innovative approach in answering such questions as: Is there such a thing as a Knox community? What do young parents need to meet their children's needs? What are these needs in order of priority? Has or could the ECDC meet these needs? How could the ECDC go about meeting these needs?"

More Supportive Relationships

Mr Jona continued, "The development of richer, more supportive relationships with children, spouses, friends, neighbours and others, and the need for better information about existing local facilities and resources and more formal knowledge about child development, family and interpersonal relationships, creative housekeeping and parent effectiveness; emerge from the study as major requirements for the development of a healthy community life style".

Improved Resources

Also highlighted by the report as being of crucial importance is the need for improved resources, such as better occasional day care facilities.

Mr Jona said, "The most important implications of the report for the various Early Childhood Development Centres services are that the services need to become even more heavily involved in developing and supporting more friendships among parents, and between parents and child care professionals, and in transmitting their specialised knowledge as well as facilitating the exchange of information amongst parents themselves.

Three requirements

"The report has recommended that the three requirements — knowledge, relationships and resources — should be provided for in such ways that they are primarily directed towards those young parents, or young couples expecting or planning to have children, who are neither yet necessarily experiencing difficulties, nor yet necessarily in the situation of having a child presenting with a defect, problem or illness.

"The ECDC would, therefore, be as much concerned with a primary preventive role as with a therapeutic one".

Direct Participation

It was also recommended in the report that, to facilitate direct participation by members of the community who are recipients of ECDC services in the planning, management and decision making of the ECDC's, there should be a new and integrated Management Steering Committee established with community representation, and also the formation of special working task groups of parents and staff to discuss and plan special areas of ECDC service delivery.

Such a new Management Steering Committee has since been set up with 50% community representation, and a number of task groups have also become operational concerning the areas of playgroups, a toy library, and inservice training.

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