



CHILD & ADOLESCENT

Health Care

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FROM THE PRESIDENT...



To commence my report I wish to acknowledge the ongoing support of both the NSW Health Department for the Non-Government Organisation Funding Grant, which maintains the National Office, and the University of Western Sydney for providing rent-free accommodation on the Westmead Campus and support of the AWCH Library for which our Association is very grateful.

Due to the efforts of the Fund AWCH chairman, Dr Graham Bench, Fund AWCH was the recipient of the proceeds of a Roger Woodward recital held in November 2001. As a result of Ruth Jensen's death AWCH NSW lost the driving force behind the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Scheme. The National Council considered it imperative that this program continue and subsequently Fund AWCH has undertaken to financially support the Scheme by paying for a coordinator for 1 day per week with the position based at National Office. A second day for the position is being met out of the NSW Health Department grant.

An issue that has been high on our agenda this year is the growing concern of accommodating children and adults on the same hospital ward. Our colleagues at the Australian Confederation of Paediatric and Child Health Nurses (NSW Branch) and the Royal College of Physicians (Victorian Branch) have also voiced their concern about the increased mixing of adults and children. In an attempt to address the issue and develop some strategies, AWCH NSW hosted a breakfast roundtable meeting on 17 October 2002. A number of concerns were discussed which formed the basis of our media release in November (See page 3).

AWCH prepared a submission for the current Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention. The Australian Confederation of Child Health and Paediatric Nurses (NSW Branch) has endorsed the AWCH submission to the HREOC Inquiry. You can find the AWCH and other submissions on the HREOC website - http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/children_detention/index.html

The AWCH 9th National Conference *Healthy Justice for Children and Young People* held at the Menzies Hotel, Sydney was a very stimulating conference program, which received a lot of positive feedback. A statement drafted out of the conference discussion was sent as a media release on 21 October (See page 3). AWCH was very fortunate to have two grants provided: one from the NSW Department

The Association for the Welfare of Child Health is funded by the NSW Department of Health and supported by the University of Western Sydney.

of Aboriginal Affairs and the other from the Federal Attorney General's National Crime Prevention Program. Dr the Honourable Andrew Refshauge opened this year's conference. The conference social event was an evening on board the old ferry South Steyne which is moored at Darling Harbour, Sydney (See pages 4 & 5).

A decision has been made by National Council that AWCH will hold its conference every 2 years with the next conference being in 2004. This will allow more time for our National Liaison Officer, Anne Cutler, to visit current branches and establish further AWCH branches throughout Australia.

I would like to acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of the National Office by members of the ASC: Ron Berney, Sonia Driene, Peta Byrne, and Jenny Laverick as the AWCH Library Representative, under the able chairmanship of Ron Berney as National Treasurer. A thank you to my fellow directors of FUND AWCH Noel Mills, Marion Steele, Ron Berney and Chair Graham Bench, and a special thank you to Ron Berney who has continued to act as our Honorary Solicitor. Thank you to Anne Cutler, Debbie Lawrence and Rowena Sebastian for all their efforts over and above the call of duty this year and the AWCH Library staff, Jenny Laverick and Josie Fletcher for their support of AWCH Branches and their work for the ideals of AWCH.

Irene Hancock
National President



CONFERENCES

Making the Youth Justice System Work Better
21-23 Feb. 2003, Bond University, Gold Coast, Qld
Jo McDonald, Legal Aid Queensland. Tel: (07) 3238 3024. Email: jmcdonal@legalaid.qld.gov.au
Fax: (07) 3229 7067.

*Beyond the Rhetoric In Early Intervention
Bridging the Gap Between Education, Health,
and Crime Prevention*
26-28 March 2003, Hilton Hotel Adelaide
Telephone 08 8463 4098 or Fax 08 8204 9883
[Mailto:underdown.judy@agd.sa.gov.au](mailto:underdown.judy@agd.sa.gov.au)

*4th International Conference on Drugs and
Young People 2003*
26-28 May 2003, Wellington Convention Centre,
Wellington NZ
Fax: +61 (03) 9328 3008
Email: events@adf.org.au www.adf.org.au

MEDIA RELEASES

4 November 2002

The Association for the Welfare of Child Health held a roundtable discussion on 17 October with health professionals and members of the community on *Addressing the issue of children and adults being admitted to the same hospital ward*.

AWCH believes strongly that the needs of children in hospital are provided for most effectively when children are cared for in paediatric wards, without adult patients being present, and by specially trained staff. AWCH is concerned that the practice of children and adults being admitted to the same hospital ward may have adverse consequences for the treatment and recuperation of both the hospitalised children and adults in these wards.

These principles are stated clearly in two policy documents: *AWCH Health Care Policy Relating to Children and Their Families*, and the ACHS/AWCH *Guidelines for Hospital-Based Child and Adolescent Care*, which is part of the program of accreditation for Australian Hospitals. These guidelines reflect best practice and all hospitals should be working towards fulfilling these guidelines for accreditation. In addition, the NSW Health Department's *Guidelines for the Hospitalisation of Children* also state the need for separate care.

The Association is concerned about:

- the particular needs of children and young people being unmet
- the safety of children, as outlined in the *Children and Young Persons (Care & Protection Act) 1998* being contravened
- the system allowing unvetted adult patients into children's wards – unlike health staff caring for children and adolescents who are required to undergo criminal record checks and prohibited employment declarations
- quality care issues - incorporating skills and competencies of paediatric-trained staff nursing adult patients, and adult-trained staff nursing children

The Association calls for an independent review of paediatric services provided in metropolitan and rural hospitals in NSW to complement the Government Action Plan (GAP) State-Wide Paediatric Services Network.

21 October 2002.

The *Healthy Justice for Children and Young People* Conference held in Sydney on 10/11 October 2002 has again highlighted the wealth of empirical knowledge we have on 'how to grow the best possible kids'.

In support of this, there has already been a plethora of research and consultation reports, the recommendations of which have NEVER been considered for implementation.

The Association for the Welfare of Child Health and delegates at the conference call upon the community and governments, if they are serious about valuing ALL children in Australia, to forfeit the short-term solutions of building more gaols and detention centres to focus on community and family protection and support early intervention and prevention programs.

AWCH 9th National Conference



Allen Madden

Dr the Honourable Andrew Refshauge, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, opened the AWCH 9th National Conference and Allen Madden, Cultural and Education Officer, Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council, welcomed the Conference delegates to the land.

Barbara Holborow, OAM gave an impassioned address about her experiences on the magistrate's bench; Dr Sev Ozdowski, OAM Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, talked about the National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention in Australia. His speech can be found on the HREOC Website: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/speeches/index.html>; and Father Chris Riley demonstrated his passion and commitment for helping young people get their lives back on track.

Gillian Calvert talked about the findings of the NSW Children's Commission Inquiry into children who have no one to turn to. The report can be found at <http://www.kids.nsw.gov.au/ourwork/inquiry.html>. Sharon Tui made a very moving address which highlighted the need for consideration of the history of indigenous people when dealing with young people who find themselves in the juvenile justice system.



Dr Sev Ozdowski OAM

This year's conference had only plenary sessions which meant that all delegates heard all the presentations and information. Some of the comments were:

- » *Opportunity to learn, grow, be inspired, challenged and encouraged*
- » *Opportunity to meet other people who care about kids and who are trying to make a difference*
- » *Plenary session - get to hear all speakers*
- » *Variation of presenters*
- » *A lot of committed, serious people who still have energy to continue in their chosen fields*
- » *Meeting more work related contacts*
- » *Relaxed atmosphere conducive to exchange of information & ideas*
- » *Breadth of topics covered*
- » *Approachability of speakers*
- » *Wide ranging issues*
- » *Inspirational speakers*
- » *Presentations were relevant*
- » *Good short, sharp sessions*
- » *Variety of input on important issues*



Sarah and the AWCH Display



*Barbara Holborow OAM, Irene Hancock,
Dr Sev Ozdowski OAM*



Sue Packer OAM

Healthy Justice for Children and Young People



Some of the suggestions for a future conference are:

- » *Indigenous child health/education*
- » *The failure of the Richmond Scheme*
- » *Issue of neglect in child protection*
- » *Political stance of AWCH on some issues*
- » *Discussion on strategies that will protect the best interests of the child in our multicultural society*
- » *More focus on what could be improved in education system, greater representation from education sector*
- » *NESB - input of abuse and justice*
- » *Kids/young people being involved*
- » *Importance of parenting - impact on outcomes for children*
- » *Representation from Teachers Association*
- » *Strategies police use when dealing with children & young people - victims and offenders*
- » *Young people with refugee backgrounds*
- » *What is happening and what is working out in the community for young people*
- » *Experiences of families going through systems of mental health and the criminal justice system*
- » *Conference extended to workshopping ideas to improve the situation for kids at risk*
- » *Cross-over between legal, health and education issues*
- » *Children with life threatening issues*
- » *Child protection legislation*
- » *More results of research in areas of interest on evaluation of programs i.e. follow-up from this Conference*

Social Event on the South Steyne



*Louise and Francis
Conference Action*

CONFERENCE MEDIA RELEASE

The *Healthy Justice for Children and Young People* Conference held in Sydney on 10/11 October 2002 has again highlighted the wealth of empirical knowledge we have on 'how to grow the best possible kids'.

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The next AWCH Conference will be in 2004

BRANCH REPORTS

AWCH NEW SOUTH WALES



On 25 September AWCH NSW held its 29th AGM. The AWCH NSW Committee has continued to hold second monthly meetings during 2002. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the generosity of Ryde Hospital in providing their boardroom as a meeting venue.

This year has been a year of re-grouping for AWCH NSW following our losses of people like Ruth Jensen and Eva Langley as well as the moving on of some of our committee members to other activities.

To acknowledge the many hours that the ward grandparent volunteers have given so generously this year we had a new badge struck depicting the AWCH logo. These were presented to all our volunteer grandparents at various morning teas and luncheons throughout the state.

One of the highlights for me this year was to be asked to present a plenary session at the 7th International Conference for Paediatric and Child Health Nurses *Caring for Kids* held at Manly in May 2002. My session was titled *Children and Young People - the AWCH Perspective*. AWCH National Office held a display at the conference which was very well attended.

I have continued to attend the Sydney Children's Hospital Parent and Consumer Council as an advisor and Tracey Marshall has been representing AWCH NSW branch on the council.

Anne Cutler has continued to attend the Family Focused Care Committee (FFCC) on behalf of AWCH NSW at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Anne has also been involved in the Disability Action Plan Group which is a sub-group of the FFCC.

As part of the government action plan for NSW Health, I was appointed to the NSW State Paediatric Network Steering Committee which will oversee the implementation of paediatric services in NSW.

Though not strictly representing AWCH, I have continued to chair the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres for the first half of this financial year; re-appointments to this committee are yet to be completed.

I have continued as a board member of the NSW Psychologists Registration Board and representing the community on the NSW Product Safety Committee for the Department of Fair Trading.

I would like to thank my committee members for their ongoing support throughout this year: Vice President Sonia Driene; Sydney Children's Hospital Parent Council Representative Tracey Marshall; Secretary Liz Mitchell; our newest member, Adrienne Woods; Ward Grandparent Coordinator Gail Tomsic; Publicity Officer Peta Byrne; Treasurer Ruth Pollard. Also a special thank you to Sonia for stepping into my position while I was on sick leave.

I would like to give special thanks to Anne Cutler and Bruce Jacobsen for their generosity for providing their home for the ward grandparents' 2001 Christmas luncheon and those AWCH people who assisted on the day. Due to the fact that many functions are held at this time of year we only had a small line-up of ward grandparents able to attend so close to Christmas, so the committee experimented in 2002 with a mid-year function which was held in August and was very well attended.



Irene Hancock
President AWCH NSW

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



I am pleased to report that during the past twelve months AWCH WA has had a manageable workload continuing to assist families who call us, primarily in relation to a planned visit to hospital. Some community talks mainly for student teachers and nurses have also been given.

At the 2001 AGM we were pleased to welcome Helen Oakley as our new treasurer. Marjorie Green retired from the position after 11 years. We took the opportunity to thank Marjorie for her enormous contribution and presented her with a bouquet of flowers as a very small token of our thanks. However, Marjorie is continuing as a committee member.

The latest news from our Hospital Familiarisation Program department is that at last we have a new pamphlet. Our thanks go to HF presenters Rona McKinnon, Kate Castledine, Moira Tuckey and Helen Johnstone, who kindly volunteered their time to review and update our pamphlet. Steve

Casteldine, Kate's brother-in-law, produced the final draft and artwork and we all are extremely happy with the result. We have since contacted all education dept district offices and they agreed to distribute the pamphlet to early childhood teachers. Jane Gostelow has recently joined our presenters team which still leaves two positions vacant.

Kate Castledine has been meeting with several hospitals with a view to offering an 'In House' pre operative familiarisation programme. Joondalup Hospital and several paediatric surgeons are supporting the idea. Parents will receive the information about this service with their child's booked admission date.

Rona McKinnon has kindly offered to take the HFP programme to the Busselton district for two weeks in fourth term, provided the response is favourable. If the bookings are higher than expected Helen Johnston has agreed to assist. I would like to congratulate Jane, Kate, Rona and Helen for both of these latest AWCH initiatives.

Following the HFP June meeting the presenters were given instruction by a physiotherapist on 'Back care'. This was followed by an individual demonstration for each presenter on the safest way to load the HFP kit into their particular vehicle.

AWCH WA's financial position is not too critical although like all 'not-for-profit' groups we are concerned about our ability to keep ahead of the new insurance requirements. This issue is still under close scrutiny due to the tie that we have with the Health Department and their requirements. To date we have not received confirmation of our Health Department HFP funding for 2002-2003.

The AWCH committee have agreed to trial bi-monthly meetings to be held at Ann Taylor's house. Almost all of our committee live south of the river and our newest member Penny Bingham travels from Baldivis to make this commitment.

The committee has now received our HFP research report entitled *Early Intervention: A preventative approach to medical procedures with young children*.

The University of Western Sydney, Parramatta campus AWCH library staff, Josie Fletcher and Jenny Laverick, are still dealing with significant changes in order to maintain the valuable service that AWCH has offered for many years. We are grateful that requests from AWCH WA on behalf of parents have always received prompt attention.

The latest news update is that sadly Jane Fare has resigned from her position as HFP coordinator. Jane has been with us since 1996 and has been a wonderful asset to AWCH. She has developed many new office procedures, maintained

a very high standard of equipment and introduced many valuable ideas to expand the HFP program. We are sorry to lose Jane but take this opportunity to wish her all the very best in her new venture. Many thanks on behalf of all the committee for her outstanding effort.

On behalf of the committee I am very pleased to report that Kate Castledine has accepted the position of coordinator. I am sure that everyone will be offering support in any way possible during Kate's settling-in period. Kate has been with us for 3 years and has a very clear picture of what the job entails.

To all the committee, Helen Oakley our Treasurer, Jane Fare our recently resigned co-ordinator, Kate Castledine our newly appointed HFP co-ordinator and all our excellent presenters, my sincere thanks once again for another successful year of great community service.

Ann Taylor
President AWCH WA



AWCH ACT



In late September 2002, AWCH ACT held its Annual General Meeting. At our last meeting, we began to explore plans to re-vitalise AWCH ACT and help it reflect more comprehensively the needs and perceptions of children and their families who seek health services in the local region. The thoughts at that time were to have a large, attention-grabbing AGM as a focus to attract more members. On reflection, it was thought more appropriate to hold the AGM now, prior to the National AWCH conference in Sydney and then be able, with our new committee, to devote ourselves to longer term planning. Later we can discuss possible strategies, particularly looking at health services outside Paediatric wards, as well as ways to be more effective in hospitals in response to the change to short admissions for children and more challenging health care requirements at home for the family.

AWCH's presence in the hospital is predominantly recognised and applauded by the exceptional service given by the 'Friends of the Children's Ward'. AWCH gets the recognition, the Paediatric social workers do the very considerable hard work involved to train and maintain

the program. Looking at ways to ensure that this program can continue to function has to be a priority for this coming year. A big thank-you to the Friends - especially John Taylor for his coordination and to Anthea Kershaw and Ann Cina for their continuing dedication.

Hospital Open Day in Children's Week last year was a great success and the planning for this year is already well under way. It will be held on Sunday 20 October from 10am till 2pm at the beginning of Children's Week. Anyone who can help that morning will be made very welcome. A special thank-you to Wendy Cummings for continuing to be on the planning committee.

This year, the Conference is again in Sydney at the All Seasons Premier Menzies Hotel on 10/11 October. The theme this year is similar to last year's in some ways - 'Healthy Justice for Children and Young People'. I submitted an abstract for a workshop, but the program this year will be all plenary sessions, so I am writing a paper on 'Child Abuse and the Courts'. I seem to have a lot to say in 20 minutes, so it still needs a lot of editing!

I would like to record a special thank-you to Wendy Cummings who continues to represent AWCH at the Consumer Participation Reference Group. As with so many of these community consumer consultations, AWCH seems to be the only representative speaking for children and their carers. No wonder AWCH needs to continue and to grow stronger.

A very sad recollection for this year is the death in February of Nancy Wilkinson, a particularly dedicated professional social worker, who had a special interest in supporting the needs and interests of sick children and their families. She demonstrated her commitment in a very practical way, by the establishment in the ACT of FAME (Families As Medical Educators). This is the Australian adaptation of a program she discovered in USA - Program DOC. Program DOC was developed to teach doctors, particularly medical students, about the impact of chronic and serious illness on the whole of the families caring for these children. Nancy arranged to use the program here and the regular presentations by parents to students and hospital staff have been both moving and educative. Over the difficult time since her death, Pam Richardson from AWCH has been particularly dedicated in ensuring the continuation of this work and Wendy Cummings has helped monitor the financial aspects of the program.

We have decided not to have a keynote speaker at our AGM this year. Our first priority is to have a friendly, food-centred get-together to recuperate from a difficult year in which we have had much to negotiate in addition to trying to maintain our commitment to AWCH ACT. If, whilst we eat and chat, we could explore things to do with AWCH over the

next twelve months, we will have made a beginning. If each of us could identify one other person we could introduce to AWCH, we would have twice as many people to do things, and that would be great!

Let's see how far we can get. I look forward to working with you all this year.



Sue Packer, AM
President AWCH ACT

WEBWATCH

Taxi Transport Subsidy Scheme applications forms
www.transport.nsw.gov.au

Support group for young people to discuss Lupus, Sjogren's, Raynaud's, Mixed Connective Tissue Disorder
lupusnsw@ozemail.com.au

Accessible Games
www.gamesfortheblind.com
www.webview.co.nz/level

Online publication for parents of children with special needs
www.specialchild.com

University of Western Sydney, Master of Care and Protection of Children and Young People
j.hayden@uws.edu.au

Helpline for media abuse
www.youngmedia.org.au

Free access to Cochrane Library
www.update-software.com/cochrane/

Good evidence about healthcare for consumers
www.nicsl.com.au

NSW Association for Adolescent Health
www.naah.org.au

Free Medical Journals
<http://www.freemedicaljournals.com/htm/index.htm>

ARCHI - Australian Resource Centre for Hospital Innovations <http://www.archi.net.au/>

AWCH HOSPITAL WARD GRANDPARENT SCHEME REPORT



The 2001/2002 period has seen a period of change for the ward grandparent scheme. Gail Tomsic was elected NSW ward grandparent representative to support the role of the Ward Grandparent co-ordinator and Deborah Lawrence resigned as ward grandparent co-ordinator in April 2002. Deborah had served in this position from May 2001 and I would

like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work and dedication that Deborah has done for the scheme. Her successor is Jaclyn Webber and we wish her well in this position.

I will now present the work achieved by Deborah Lawrence up to her resignation.

Deborah regularly visited all hospitals that participated in the ward grandparent scheme and was actively involved in the recruitment of new ward grandparents. In order to appreciate the work and dedication by our volunteers, Deborah organised special badges that were presented to each of the ward grandparents at their respective hospitals to say thank-you. The badges were greatly received and are worn with pride whilst the ward grandparents work with the children.

AWCH also organised a luncheon to thank our volunteers which was held at the Mercure Hotel on 9 August 2002. This was well attended and welcomed. We had a great response from the ward grandparents who appreciated and enjoyed the day. I would like to thank the hotel for their hospitality and donation of wine as a gift for all who attended on the day.

Expanding the Scheme

There is a need to promote the AWCH Ward Grandparent Scheme more widely for take-up by other hospitals and to attract prospective Ward Grandparents. A particular need exists for Ward Grandpas. Deborah had been liaising with Kempsey Base, Campbelltown and Canterbury Hospitals who all expressed an interest.

Ward Grandparents Coordinators Meeting

A major change this year was to hold a quarterly ward grandparent coordinators' meeting to discuss issues and provide support to this group. So far we have held two meetings. Our first meeting was well attended and a number of issues were raised. These included development of an orientation booklet for ward grandparents and training issues. Also a major concern by peripheral hospital co-ordinators was that there needs to be a second tier

developed within the scheme. There is a need for a new style of ward grandparent as people are willing to give time but can not commit to a large block and children are not long in hospital these days. This is a direction and an initiative to be taken up in the new year.

Without the dedication of the 50 or so current AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparents and past Ward Grandparents the scheme would founder. It is their hard work, commitment and energy, which have moved the scheme for 15 years. We also have to acknowledge the health professionals at the hospitals who successfully squeeze the coordination of the AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparents into their demanding schedules. I hope that AWCH can continue to give support, whether financial or otherwise, to bolster their efforts.



*Gail Tomsic NSW AWCH
Hospital Ward Grandparent Representative*

AWCH Hospital Ward Grandparent Luncheon



Dawn & Meredith



Irene, Sheila, Betty



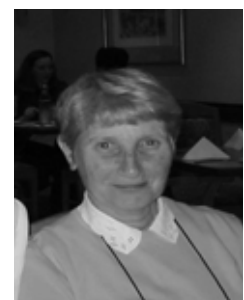
Mary, Anne, Judith



Pat Lola Barbara



Emma



Gloria

Building an Australia Fit for Children

By Dr Sev Ozdowski, Human Rights and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, OAM

Nearly eleven years ago Australia ratified the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Over the past decade, significant progress has been made in enshrining children's rights in Australia. As Federal Human Rights Commissioner, it is my task to promote and protect the human rights of all people in Australia. In particular, the Commission can:

- *Inquire into acts or practices that may infringe on human rights - both as raised in individual complaints alleging infringement by or on behalf of the Commonwealth and as evident in systemic violations including those established by law;*
- *Make recommendations to the Federal Parliament on measures needed to prevent future violations and/or remedy past breaches; and*
- *Report on any actions that should be taken by Australia in order to comply with relevant international instruments.*

With respect to children's rights, the Commission can

- *Monitor respect for the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Australia;*
- *Receive complaints from children of alleged violations of their rights under the Convention;*
- *Review new legislation and policy to check Convention compatibility;*
- *Conduct public education campaigns on children's rights; and*
- *Produce Briefing Notes on specific areas of children's rights.*

So what can we say about the situation of children and young people in Australia? Australia has a good record in caring for its children. For instance, to pick 2 areas at random:

Immunisation coverage

According to Government figures, in 1996, only 56% of one-year olds had been immunised against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, polio, measles, TB

By 2000, that figure was 90%.

Deaths due to injuries in 5-19 year olds

In 1988, the figure was 28.6 per 100,000

By 1998, it had been reduced to 16.1 per 100,000

These figures are commendable. However, we still need to address the serious problems faced by indigenous children, children in state institutions and the nearly 15% of children living below the poverty line (according to the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling). Too often, Australia's most vulnerable children slip through the

net. This is just not good enough.

Australians, through our governments, community and professional organisations, schools and businesses need to take greater responsibility to ensure that no child misses out on the enjoyment of their inherent human rights.

The rights I am speaking of are basic education, good health services and protection from violence, both institutional and within the home. It is the duty of the state, and indeed the entire community, to look after children and young people on the margins. Young people can fall into more than one category of disadvantage. A homeless child can face multiple discrimination if, for example, she is a girl and is drug-dependent, or if she is Aboriginal and has a disability. These children are more likely to miss out on educational and employment opportunities, in some cases because they are unaware of the opportunities that are theoretically available to all. As you will all be well aware, without proper education and development programs, the physical and mental health of children suffers.

Consultations

I have recently conducted a series of consultations around the country on the challenges facing children and young people today. These consultations were to precede the planned UN Special Session on Children which was to take place in New York in September but postponed due to the tragic events in that city. The Special Session was to evaluate the 10 years since the World Summit for Children, and to set new goals for the survival and development of all children. The Special Session will now take place next year.

Some common themes have emerged during my consultations. The first one is **participation**. It is crucial that children and young people have a meaningful say in those issues that affect them on a daily basis. Even very young children can express their views; the key is finding ways for them to do so. Where children are involved in the decision making, it greatly increases the chances of programs actually working.

Participation by young people in decisions about their **education** is vital. Young people tell me that they need more civic and democracy education in Australian schools. They need more information and guidance on how to participate effectively in the democratic processes. Culturally appropriate and flexible schooling that takes into account the needs of children with behavioural problems or language difficulties can go a long way to addressing low school retention rates. Rather than trying to mould the child to fit the system, the system must be changed to fit the child.

Another emerging theme was discrimination by **police** against young people, especially those of Asian or indigenous descent. Over-policing of certain areas, where police have the power to 'move on' young people who are in a public place, further alienates the very young people that the community should be embracing. There are **no police cautioning guidelines** - as part of national standards for juvenile justice - which means that young people can be discriminated against on the grounds of geography. Many young people I consulted said that the police do not take them seriously if they want help.

The abuse of the rights of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people** is an issue that would require a separate address. But let me give you some figures:

49.8% of the indigenous population is under 18 years of age, compared with 28.3% of the non-indigenous population. This highlights the need for increased resources for indigenous children - in the areas of health, housing, education, employment and training.

32% of indigenous young people complete secondary school compared with 73% of non-indigenous young people.

42% of all juveniles in custody are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders, and the figure is 50% for girls. The over-representation points to the need for better diversionary programs and strategies for reducing the involvement of indigenous young people in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

It is clear that there are **not enough community resources** to help children and young people on the margins, particularly where there has been family breakdown. This results in a lack of connection with others - because there is no family or trusted adult to turn to for guidance - and it leaves children vulnerable to loneliness and isolation. These are the children who slip through the net. These are the children who must be reached before they become prey to homelessness, suicide, substance abuse, crime or mental illness. We need to listen to their views when formulating policies and laws.

In many states, people raised the need for **an advocacy structure for children** to be put in place. Participants at the consultations recommended the creation of Children's Commissions at the State and Federal level, as well as an independent office for children which could monitor and collect data on children's well-being and rights.

There was criticism of the legal system in some states for providing inadequate protection and claims that the standards of proof for cases of **child sexual abuse** were too high and the sentences too light. Also, there was considerable concern about the number of children who are **primary carers for parents** and therefore unable to attend school. Their right to education is compromised through the lack of flexible arrangements for home schooling.

When the UN Special Session on Children is rescheduled I will report on my consultations to the Federal Government through the Prime Minister's representative to the Special Session. The Special Session will offer Australia a unique opportunity to re-evaluate its policies towards children and to recommit itself to finding practical goals to improve the situation for children on the margins.

The ongoing challenge for me is promoting an understanding and acceptance of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* which requires regular monitoring of the cases of children in difficult circumstances. These children are hard to reach and therefore hard to help. We need to ensure regular independent review of their treatment, in order to know whether we are properly reaching them. I would like to turn now to a case study of a particular group of marginalised children and young people in Australia.

Children in immigration detention

One of my priorities is the care and protection of children and young people in immigration detention. These children are among the most vulnerable in Australia today, especially those who have come here without their parents.

The precise number of children held in Australia's six immigration detention centres will vary from week to week. However, it is possible to say that approximately five hundred children are held at any one time and that the figures are comparable to the country's entire juvenile detention population.

But who are these children? Most people can only rely on newspaper reports, however, I and the Commonwealth Ombudsman inspect each detention centre on an annual basis and have the opportunity to meet them during those inspections. These visits reinforce the fact that we must never lose sight of their being children. Because they are children seeking asylum, they are entitled to special care and protection under the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Children in a refugee situation are particularly vulnerable. By refugee situation I do not mean that they necessarily qualify under the refugee definition in the Refugee Convention, but it is a helpful way to describe who these children are. The refugee experience brings with it elements of war and persecution, of fear, flight and displacement and of arriving in a strange country after a long journey, where a different culture, language and religion are often practiced. Confronting and traumatic as these experiences are for adults, how much more so for children? When we add the fact that some children may have either suffered or witnessed the torture or murder of family members prior to or during flight, we begin to see how vulnerable and fragile these children are and how these experiences impact upon the emotional well-being, health and development of the child.

One thing is clear: if Australia decides to detain children, it must accept that this policy brings with it certain obligations to do right by the children.

During their time in detention, children are entitled to the same rights as other children in Australia by virtue of the principle of non-discrimination in the Convention. In all decisions concerning them, the best interests of the child are meant to be paramount.

However, in practical terms, detainee children cannot have access to the health and education services other children in Australia can, by virtue of this detention. The detention centre does provide health, education and other services, but I am not convinced these services are sufficient to meet their needs or indeed their rights under the Convention. Whereas children whose parents arrive on a tourist visa and then seek refugee status, have certain rights, for example to attend school and receive support services such as counselling, these services are not available to the same degree in detention centres.

Children who experience abuse or violence can display a wide range of symptoms: anxiety, sleep disturbance and nightmares, bedwetting, depression, behavioural problems, either introversion or aggression, problems with relationships, emotional numbness, learning difficulties, eating disorders and psychosomatic health problems. Under the Convention, all countries are obliged to take steps to rehabilitate child trauma victims, help them recover and reintegrate into society 'in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child'. What does this mean in practice? Does it require Australia to identify a child's past trauma at an early stage and to facilitate the child's recovery either through treatment by trained specialists in the detention centre or through early release into the community of the child and their family, if this is in their best interests, as decided by medical experts? Does this happen in practice? Can it happen under the current law?

What concerns me greatly are the cases of long-term detention, where children and their families cannot go backward or forward. Their refugee application may drag on and on, be rejected but the family cannot be deported to another country because of the difficulty of procuring travel documents or because they come from a country such as Afghanistan or Iraq where people cannot be practically returned at the present time. During the impasse they remain in detention for months, sometimes years. This is unacceptable in my view and finding a solution will be one of my priorities as Human Rights Commissioner.

This is why I am considering inquiring into the treatment of children in immigration detention in Australia, with reference to the rights guaranteed in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. I hope to engage with you, the experts, in ascertaining what precisely we need to put in place in our detention policy, to secure the care and protection of this

marginalised and vulnerable group of children. I believe that creative solutions can be found to ensure that children whose emotional well-being or mental or physical health needs require their early release from detention, can indeed be released into the community.

Children in immigration detention have already seen, heard, learnt, feared and faced an incredible array of challenges before reaching Australia. Recently during an inspection visit of the Villawood immigration detention centre, I met with a number of families who are detained there. I will call one young person we interviewed 'Lisa'. Lisa is 13 years old and arrived with her family from Iran earlier this year. We asked Lisa what she was learning at school. She learns English, maths and handicrafts, but not geography. 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' We asked her. 'A doctor', she replied instantly, her face lighting up. At that moment, Lisa's father smiled at his daughter and this image of what the future might bring.

Now I will not say that Lisa and her family are refugees under the Refugee Convention as I am unfamiliar with their claims. Nor will I say whether Lisa should become a doctor in Australia or in Iran or a third country. But what I will stress is that Lisa is a child. She is a child who, during her time in Australia, is entitled to all the rights children are entitled to in this country. It is the responsibility of all of us to ensure that the children like Lisa in immigration detention receive the care and protection they are entitled to, and that under no circumstances should detention further harm children's well-being.

We cannot rest on our laurels until we have reached the most marginalised children and young people. Then we can finally say we have built an Australia truly fit for children.

Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you and I look forward now to your expert observations.



NATIONAL OFFICE REPORT



AWCH National Office has undertaken a number of projects including a submission into the *National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention in Australia*, raising the issue of *Caring for Children and Adults on the Same Hospital Ward* and organising the 9th AWCH National Conference *Healthy Justice for Children and Young People*.

AWCH Website Development

The AWCH website has been re-vamped. Take a look at the new site at www.awch.org.au.

AWCH Email Newsletter

AWCH now offers a bi-monthly email newsletter. To be put on the list to receive this newsletter. Contact awch@awch.com.au.

The Family Focused Care Committee at the Children's Hospital at Westmead has undertaken a number of projects this year:

- Bear Permit which is a concept formulated to facilitate the hospitalisation process for families
- Parent Booklet update chaired by a parent
- Improved signage around the hospital
- A protocol for parent-administered medication
- Video on the education of staff about the special needs of disabled children and their families
- Food trolley which goes to the wards
- Protocol regarding Latex Allergies
- A list of specialized equipment available for children with an ongoing disability published on the hospital's Intranet

The Network for Playtherapy & Hospital Environment for Children (NPHC) - Japan



A tour of Sydney Hospitals and the AWCH Library was organised for a sister organisation from Japan. The delegation of 11 people spent 2 days at the Children's Hospital at Westmead, a morning at Sydney Children's Hospital and a morning at the AWCH Library.

National Council

The National Council endorsed the AWCH submission into the National Inquiry into Children in Detention and discussed other issues throughout the year including:

- no smoking policies in hospitals
- development of the Hospital Familiarisation Program (HFP) Poster
- the need for a poster for emergency departments in languages other than English
- the development of an AWCH Education Policy for Hospitalised Children and Young People
- gowning up on hospital wards
- research on the evaluation of the HFP program
- research into the health of asylum seeking children
- the play policy and play course

Special Thankyous

My thanks to George Hancock, Beatrix Parra, Shalini Myakala, Ron Berney, Graham Bench, Rowena Sebastian, Debbie Lawrence, Jaclyn Webber, Jenny Laverick, Josie Fletcher and Irene Hancock for all their wonderful work and support of AWCH National Office during 2002.



Thank you to AWCH members who contribute in many different ways towards the psychosocial care of children and young people in our Australian health care system. I would like wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year for 2002.

Anne Cutler
National Liaison Officer



THE LATEST FROM THE LIBRARY

AWCH Library holds information for parents and professionals on child and adolescent health, specialising in psychosocial care. Services are established so that you do not have to visit in person. Anyone from across Australia is welcome to use the library's extensive resources.

Opening Hours: 8-4pm Monday-Friday

Contact:

phone: 02 9633 1988

fax: 02 9633 1180

email: awch@awch.com.au

Catalogue Available

FREE

The AWCH Library **Audio-visual Catalogue** gives a complete description of all audio-visual items available for loan.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS REVIEW



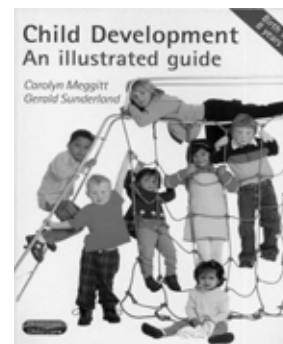
VIDEO REVIEW

MMR –WHAT PARENTS WANT TO KNOW

30 mins, colour, ½”VHS
V/C, NHS Health
Promotion England,
Resource Base Production,
London, 2001

In Britain over the last few years there has been some controversy concerning the MMR vaccination for young children. Many parents have questioned the value of the vaccination and are interested in the risks and benefits, feeling that they have been placed in a situation of being between ‘a rock and a hard place’. This video, through interviews by parents with medical professionals, discusses their concerns. Measles, mumps and rubella all have potentially very serious consequences and can also be dangerous and at times fatal conditions. The safety and efficacy of the vaccines are stressed through discussions with the government Principal Medical Officer, the head of the immunisation division of the Public Health Laboratory service, a paediatrician and also a health visitor. Questions raised by parents include the links with autism, allergies and other conflicting issues.

Another interesting video on this subject is MMR – The Big Questions, a question and answer session for health professionals.



BOOK REVIEW

CHILD DEVELOPMENT AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE

Meggitt, Carolyn
Sunderland, Gerald

This is a comprehensively illustrated book providing a concise reference guide to the general development of children from birth to the age of eight years. The areas of development covered include physical, cognitive, language, emotional and social development and also moral and spiritual development. For each developmental stage the key changes are described in clear text and illustrated with photographs. Children with special needs, that is those children whose development differs from the norm, are discussed and ideas for promoting their development relevant to their specific needs are given.

This book provides assurance when a child is developing normally and also enables the reader to identify those children who for some reason may not be following normative stages.

AWCH Library Report



The AWCH Library database which lists resources on the needs of children and adolescents in the health care system, chronically ill children, play in hospital, preparation for hospitalisation and surgery, disabilities, genetic conditions and many other topics is searchable via the web at <http://www.tdm.com.au/awch.htm>. It can also be accessed via the database section of the University

of Western Sydney home page <http://www.uws.edu.au>.

Immediate access to the resources listed in the catalogue is still a major factor in our ability to assist in the answering of the many reference queries received from all sections of the professional and general community as well as students of the University of Western Sydney. Our clients are drawn from all states of Australia and it should be noted that 95% never visit the library – this flexible delivery has always been an important aspect of AWCH Library's specialised service.

The following services are available:

- Provision of a specialised reference service via email, fax, mail and telephone
- Bibliographies of books, journal articles, pamphlets, reports, web sites and audiovisual material are available on requested topics
- The ability to provide immediate document delivery of any item located on the AWCH Library database
- An audiovisual collection available for loan Australia-wide, free of charge to accredited borrowers. Catalogue available on request
- Document delivery enhanced through interlibrary loans from other libraries. Membership of the network GRATISNET provides free inter-library loan exchange
- Access to the resources of the University Of Western Sydney Library, especially the databases

These following enquiries are included to illustrate the variety and complexity of the reference enquiries received and the geographic areas that the library services cover:

From the Professional Community

- There are still many enquiries from hospitals, particularly paediatric unit nurse managers, Australia-wide re accommodating children in adult wards – this is a result of the growing problem of pressure on the funding of health services.

- Clinical nurse specialist from Western Australia requested information on the effects of hospitalisation
- Social worker from Orange requesting information on toddlers in hospital and the psychological aspects of this
- Play specialist from Orange, NSW requested general information on play in hospital. There is very little other assistance for professionals in the country who need access to information
- Paediatric nurse from the La Trobe area, Victoria requesting information on orientation programs
- Melbourne nurse unit manager requesting information on paediatric guidelines for child hospitalisation
- Social worker from Sydney requesting information on parental support for premature infants

From the Parent Community

These requests may come via the community health centre, support groups, social workers or direct from the parents.

- Parent from South Australia requesting information on autism
- Parent from Newcastle seeking information on AARSKOGS syndrome
- Parent of a child with epidermolysis bullosa requesting information
- Queensland parent seeking information on Rubinstein-Taybi syndrome
- Mother with a disability sought books in order to explain disabilities to young children

From the student community

The library receives information requests from all levels of students ranging from high school students to postgraduate students at tertiary institutions.

- Students from the University of Western Sydney both undergraduate and postgraduate
- Nursing student from Bathurst requiring information on child abuse
- Education student from Tasmania requesting information on return to school for children who have been treated for cancer
- PhD student from Brisbane searching for information on the benefits of play programs in hospital
- South Australian student writing assignment on the long term effects of hospitalisation

Jenny Laverick
AWCH Librarian





Contact Details



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