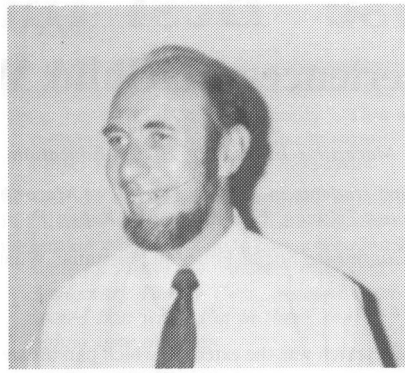




Lloyd Owen

EDITORIAL

Papers in this edition of the Journal were delivered at the Children's Bureau of Australia's National Conference held in Brisbane from the 25th-29th July, 1988.

The Conference was attended by some 300 participants on a daily or sessional basis with 110 of that number registered for the whole Conference.

Whilst the majority of participants came from Queensland, there were sizeable delegations from Victoria, New South Wales and representatives from the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. There was daily press and radio coverage of the Conference including reports on the ABC aboriginal media. The additional attraction of EXPO is not to be denied!

The Bardon Professional Development Centre, in a bush setting only twenty minutes from the heart of Brisbane, provided an ideal venue for the Conference.

A pre-conference dinner was attended by many and was given a stimulating address by Dr. Keith Tronc.

The Conference was officially opened by the Governor-General, Sir Ninian Stephen, who is the Patron of the Bureau. Sir Ninian's address reflected his informed and sympathetic understanding of the Bureau and its concerns for children through research, advocacy and publications.

The first keynote address was given by a visiting speaker, Mr. Alan Kendall, a Divisional Director of Dr. Barnardo's Homes in Northern U.K. His address was on the topic "A Journey of Hope: The Development of a Voluntary Agencies Services for Intellectually Handicapped Children". Alan, with this and subsequent workshop contributions, immediately impressed the conference attenders as a man of compassion and vision. He drew from case work experience to demonstrate that de-institutionalization, sensitively planned and carried out gives dignity, hope and personal growth to many children who are otherwise written off as not having much future.

The second keynote address, delivered by Ms. Lila Watson who is a lecturer in Aboriginal Studies in the Department of Social Work, University of Queensland, was also most memorable, challenging and sobering. She argued for a better understanding and communication between those with a western heritage and the Murri (aboriginal) people, seeing Murri culture and insights as a resource for all Australians, not just for aboriginal people.

The final keynote address was given by Emeritus Professor Peter Boss, Director of the Children's Bureau of Australia. His paper entitled "Children in Fast Lane Australia" argued for an appreciation of the importance of the impact of socio-political considerations on children and their families. He particularly examined the plight of those quarter of a million children in the "slow lane" whose families are on or below the poverty line.

The conference gave a comprehensive range of workshop electives involving professionals from the wide spectrum of child concerns as resource persons. The workshops covered the topics of respite care for families with disabled children, childhood accidents and their prevention, children's development in the first three years, aboriginal perspective in the raising of children, residential care for profoundly intellectually handicapped children, treatment of sexually abused children, a hands on approach to family therapy, future trends in education, prevention of family breakdown, service delivery for aboriginal children, legal considerations in foster care, the self image of the child, developmental aspects to children's behavioural problems, nutritional issues for ethnic children, education for cultural revival, support service for families with handicapped children and an interesting address on children and sport, including legal considerations.

Respondents on the conference evaluation sheets and from general comments gained were unanimous that the Conference was good value, well organised and friendly.

The keynote addresses were well received with the comment that many found Lila Watson's address provided them with a helpful perspective on aboriginal culture and issues.

The workshops received praise, particularly with regard to the high calibre of the presenters.

Feedback was gained by the organisers for future conferences in terms of opportunity for increased interaction in workshops, sharing the experiences of the participants and a session to share information about developments across the States.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the Conference was appreciated as a challenge for participants to see children's issues from a different perspective and this was seen as worth developing further in future conferences.