Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Children in Residential Institutions

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Foreword

This submission consists of abstracts from the PhD thesis which I completed in 2003 on child welfare in Victoria. While the focus of the thesis was on policy developments and changes since 1970, I put this in context with descriptions of child welfare as it operated in the 1960s and 1970s. That is, the thesis contains descriptions of child welfare as it existed in the period which, from my reading of transcripts of hearings, are of particular interest to the Senate Inquiry. Extracts from my thesis and its appendices have been lightly edited and included in this submission.

The submission is divided into a number of papers.

Paper One describes broad developments in child welfare in the period referred to.

Paper Two describes developments in child protection in the same period. At that point there was little or no integration between child protection and other child welfare programs, so it is simplest to treat them separately as I have done.

Paper Three sets the context for a description of organisational change in the child welfare organisation I joined in 1970. I have included this because the way organisations behaved during that period and the way they – or the staff in them – treated children is clearly of both interest and concern. Paper Four describes the process of change in that organisation as I recorded it for an inquiry into child welfare in 1975.

Paper Five describes the results of a survey of staffing in child welfare organisations which I conducted in 1975. This is included because although there would be some changes from earlier periods (particularly in those organisations operating family group homes) the staffing in large congregate care and campus-based institutions would be similar. Since the Senate Inquiry has expressed interest in the staffing of children's institutions in Victoria this information may be of relevance.

I have edited the material in my thesis lightly in order to eliminate extraneous references. I am aware that, nevertheless, the submission is long and I apologise for that. After reflection however I decided not to try to summarise the material. In particular I was concerned to let material I wrote in the 1970s, which constitutes approximately a large proportion of this submission, stand unedited. It providers `insider' perspectives from my roles in practice, organisational and system-wide change during that period and there is very little similar material recorded in Australia.

Paper One

Child Welfare in Victoria in the 1970s: Broad Context and Major Developments

This paper briefly sketches child welfare developments in Victoria from white settlement on. It then concentrates primarily on describing the broad features of that field during the 1960s and especially the 1970s. I have written a more detailed chapter on trends in child welfare generally since white settlement in Australia (Goddard & Carew 1993: ch. 3). Developments in child protection occurred in isolation for some time and are covered in Paper Two.

The literature and research on child welfare in Australia up to the 1970s was sparse but general trends can be outlined. In Victoria child welfare provisions were required shortly after the new colony was established in the 1830s. A version of foster care commenced in the 1840s, soon followed by the establishment of several orphanages. These were under the auspice of charitable organizations and heavily subsidized by the government. Development was rather haphazard until the *Neglected and Criminal Children's Act 1864* gave Victoria the power to open industrial schools. That Act also defined situations in which children might be removed from the care of their parents, and established the legal obligation of parents to contribute to the support of children in care. Industrial schools were set up to care for abandoned and wandering children, and reformatories for offenders. There was no streaming of children with particular needs or problems until then.

Boarding out became the preferred method of out-of-home care in the 1870s following a Royal Commission into residential care. It remained so until the 1930s when it decreased in importance, again in favour of residential care, although the early part of the century also saw the establishment of programs which aimed at reform of parents who were perceived as being wayward.

The *Children's Welfare Act 1954* was seen by the government as a significant development (Children's Welfare Department Victoria 1955)[1]. The department was empowered to deal with children committed to it by the

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[1] References to the existence of a `Children's Welfare Department' up to 1960 and a `Social Welfare Department' from 1960 to 1970 may be misleading. The bodies responsible for child welfare during those years did bear those titles, but in reality they were divisions of other departments. It was not until the passing of the Social Welfare Act in 1970 (implemented from January 5 1971) that the Social Welfare Department was established as a separate department in its own right.

Children's Court, to exercise certain licensing and supervisory powers with regard to charitable organizations caring for children, and to provide assistance to needy children living in their own homes.   The activity which followed these legislative provisions was modest in scale, although during the 1950s and 1960s reception centres were established, as well as homes to deal with the more difficult children or those with disabilities.   This was far from sufficient and reception centres such as Turana (for young men) and Allambie (for younger children) became semi-permanent residences for many children who could not be placed elsewhere.

The role of the Department was largely confined to running the large reception centres, with the bulk of residential care provided by the `voluntary' sector (as the non-government sector was then called).   The Department established its first group homes in 1957 (Children's Welfare Department Victoria 1958).   In the late 1950s and 1960s it established facilities for those children not catered for elsewhere (such as those with behaviour problems, the `mentally retarded', those with physical disabilities, and female delinquents).   Foster care was not an unknown service; in 1960 there were over 1000 wards in foster care, 21.5% of the total (Children's Welfare Department 1960).

Data are lacking, but the standards of foster care would have to have been questionable given the lack of staff to supervise and support placements. The Social Welfare Department's Annual Report 1968 shows a total of only 129 professional staff in all areas, including prisons, research and statistics, training, and probation and parole as well as in the child and family welfare functions. The 1970 Annual Report broke this down further, showing a total of 58 professional staff out of a total of 536 staff in the family and youth welfare areas (Social Welfare Department 1970a).   The Annual Reports of the Director General of Social Welfare, Alec Whatmore, regularly mentioned the need for extra resources to deal with problems in child welfare in the 1960s.

The *Social Welfare Act 1960* changed the name of the Department and incorporated the Prisons division into it.   Of interest is the philosophy at that time that SWD's role in child welfare would be a `'"caring guardian" role rather than an "intervener role"' (Hiskey 1980: 6)

Another Department function during this period was to deal with the child migration program.   Some child migrants were placed privately, others in institutions until they were ready for employment.   I recall a visit to one such institution in the early 1970s.   It was located in a rural area approximately an hour's drive from Melbourne, and consisted of twelve cottages on the one campus.   There were, however, only eleven groups of children in residence. Each Friday afternoon, after school, the children would pack up their meagre belongings in their little cardboard cases and move to the next cottage.   The cycling of every group to the next cottage each week had the effect of giving cottage parents one free weekend every three months.

This system was a source of pride for the institution's administrators, and it did give occasional weekends off to cottage parents – a benefit many institutions did not provide.   However it effectively ensured that there were

few stable, permanent adult relationships formed for these children who had already undergone the trauma of migration, and no place they could call `home'. I have not heard the then residents of this institution (which was subsequently phased out a decade later) voicing the complaints I have heard from residents of other institutions, or indeed voiced by child migrants living in facilities in other states. That said, this system seemed to take no account of the needs or feelings of the children themselves.

With regard to developments immediately prior to the 1970s, there was little action to improve standards in out-of-home care in spite of apparent government commitment. A survey of child care in Victoria was reported on in 1964 (Victorian Government 1964); it was a survey of training needs of residential staff, not a broader analysis. A project developing standards for residential care was completed (Social Welfare Department Victoria 1970b) but no action was taken to implement it. In any case the report was general and superficial and would have been difficult to implement.

The major Victorian research study available before 1970 was conducted by Len Tierney (1963), who reported on research conducted during 1960-1962. Tierney noted that in June 1960 there were some 6,918 children in voluntary children's homes or subject to the care of the Children's Welfare department, a rate of 7 per 1000 of all Victorian children in the age range 0-17.

Tierney (1963: 2-13) studied a sample selected from 4,243 children in institutions other than juvenile schools or institutions for the mentally or physically handicapped. Children in foster care were included. His conclusions were:

- `educational retardation' occurred five to seven times more frequently among institutionalised children than among all Victorian children

- only 22.1% of state wards and 8.5% of privately placed children had two surviving parents living in the same household. In 25% of cases it was likely that separated parents had remarried or entered a new relationship

- more than 80% of fathers of wards were unskilled (50% of fathers of privately admitted children were unskilled)

- there was a high rate (over 70%) among parents of homelessness or temporary or inadequate accommodation

- major reasons for admission to wardship were neglect (54%), parental separation (16%), the child's behaviour (14%) and some affliction of the parents (8.3%)

- children remained in care because of unfit parents (32.9%) or having no relative in touch with them (26%). Privately admitted children frequently stayed in care because of the inability of a sole parent to

provide adequate full-time care (37.8%) or because the parents had inadequate income or housing (18.6%)

- the efforts of services tended to focus on arranging some form of substitute care, with insufficient attention to resolving other problems

- planning for individual children was marked by confused lines of responsibility, shortage of staff, and uncertainty about the nature of the task to be undertaken.   As well there was a shortage of services available to resolve the problems of parents.

The problems in the child welfare system (some of which still exist) combined with the evidence of poverty in the families stand out in these findings.   As Carter (1983) was to observe nearly two decades later, the characteristics of the families of children coming into care were, for a variety of reasons, to change somewhat.

While Tierney's study involved an analysis of the child welfare system as such, critical analysis of the way child abuse was constructed at that time was absent.   One can read Tierney's work and assume that the `child abuse' of the time (the term was not then in use) was about neglect and incompetent parents, combined with poverty.   Terms such as physical abuse or sexual abuse were not used.   Nor was there any critical analysis of the nature and role of the family, though the provision of family support was certainly seen as a high priority.   Analysis of gender issues was also absent.   It was a further decade before critical analyses began to appear (see Tierney 1972; Leaper 1974; Foreman 1975 & 1976 as examples).

Several years after his original study, Tierney made the following observation about child welfare:

> There is surprisingly little written in this field...One of the areas...which requires some explanation is this relative lack of public interest in child welfare.   The field is not an inconsiderable one.   In 1970 a study of the annual reports of State Child Welfare departments indicated that there were 37,000 children in substitute care and a further 10,000 children under official supervision.   It could be estimated that a further 100,000 children were living in `at risk' situations.
>
> Tierney 1972: 11

After surveying the historical and philosophical origins of child welfare Tierney concluded (1972: 15)

> ...the forces which have shaped the Australian definition of child welfare have been the political and social definitions which have set the limits of who should be served under what conditions and at what cost.   The definition implied that by and large the individual must make his provisions for his own family's needs with the State assisting in the last resort.

While child welfare provisions have radically changed since, it is doubtful that the underlying premises which Tierney identified have fundamentally changed. What may be different is the nature and extent of poverty in the child welfare population up to the 1970s. It is still true that most of the families coming to the attention of child welfare authorities are poor (Maunders et al. 1999), but Carter (1983) observed in the 1980s that *intergenerational* poverty was no longer the overwhelming feature of the child protection population that it previously had been.

Lawrence, speaking at the same conference as Tierney in 1972, had an additional perspective on child welfare provision and its inadequacies:

> I remember a few years ago, a permanent head of one of the state child welfare departments saying with pride that `child welfare' was `non political'. What he was really referring to was the fact that the two main political parties had done a deal to keep the expenditures chronically low. All important matters tend to be and should be matters of political concern.
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> Lawrence 1972: 153

It would be an exaggeration to say such `deals' still exist, if indeed they ever did in a tangible sense. However analysis of policy statements and of parliamentary debates suggests that policy differences between the key political parties in Victoria have been relatively minor for most of the past thirty years. There has been little debate or dispute about the merits of current legislation or service provision, with rare exceptions such as the debates over mandatory reporting in the early 1990s. Labor Parties have tended to favour central service provision, though writing in 2003 it seems unlikely that, having regained power in Victoria, they will institute a major swing back to government-provided services. Liberal Parties have typically favoured privatisation. Apart from these not insignificant differences, most political disputes have centred around which party could administer the system best. Lawrence's views may therefore still have force, even if the `deal' operates by default rather than design.

As someone who attended that 1972 conference, still familiarizing myself with Victorian child welfare provision, I was struck by these comments, by the poor level of conceptualisation in most papers, and by the superficial level of debate. Perusal of the conference proceedings three decades later leaves the same impression.

Although the 1970s had this inauspicious intellectual beginning, they were a time of substantial change in child welfare and in human services generally. This may surprise given a conservative party was in power at state level, but significant developments were initiated by the Liberal Party. Some occurred under considerable pressure, as will be seen. Pressure came especially from a more energised voluntary sector (the term `non-government' emerged in the 1980s).

Changes occurred at a number of levels. At the macro level, the Australian economy, a bastion of health and full employment, began to run into difficulty

Inflation climbed rapidly. With the advent of the Fraser Liberal Government federally in 1975 the right wing began to cut into the welfare state (largely unsuccessfully for some time, mainly due to increased costs imposed by the growth of unemployment).

There were other signs of the growth of what we now call economic rationalism. The provision and coordination of health and welfare services in Australia was reviewed and greater coordination and rationalisation in this area was recommended (Royal Commission on Australian Government Administration 1975; Task Force on Coordination in Welfare and Health 1977). Later, the Australian Senate reviewed the state of program evaluation in the human services. The Senators were scathing in their condemnation (Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare 1978). Their report, a positivist view of the development of knowledge, urged a more scientific approach to the planning and evaluation of welfare services.

Some amusing passages in the report involve the Senate Committee's interviews with stakeholders in the field, including Government Departmental Heads and prominent leaders of voluntary agencies. The then Head of Social Security, for example, was condemned for suggesting that many political decisions were influenced by letters that crossed the Minister's desk. The Senate Committee expressed its concern that decisions should be made in such a way and that public service heads might endorse it (Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare 1978).

These events were signals of a change in culture that was gaining momentum. Labor Parties at state and federal levels translated these trends into policy and public service management in the early 1980s, though the seeds of what we now call `economic rationalism' and `managerialism' were sown under conservative political regimes in the 1970s.

There were other inquiries at both state and federal levels. The Poverty Enquiry is the best known. We also had a Royal Commission into Human Relationships, inquiries into the role of local government, into retardation, into drugs, child care and many more (see Victorian Government 1978 for a partial listing). The 1970s were a time of intellectual and social inquiry.

At state and child welfare level there were more tangible developments. The decade began with the implementation of the new Social Welfare Department, which commenced operating on January 5 1971 (Social Welfare Department 1971). The SWD, now a separate department in its own right, had five divisions; family welfare (its focus was on out-of-home care at that time); youth welfare; the prisons division (administration of prisons remained with the department until the 1980s); research and statistics; and training.

Some of the provisions of the Act are noteworthy when compared with current provisions (see Liddell and Liddell 2000 for details on the latter). Section 13 (1) outlined the aims of the act as

(a) to promote family welfare in the community, to prevent disruption of family life and to mitigate the effects thereof

(b) to promote cooperation with and between voluntary organizations, government Departments, and persons concerned with the welfare care and protection of persons in distress or in need of assistance

(c) to control and supervise children and young persons in need of care and protection within the meaning of the Act

(d) to manage and control all children's reception centres and children's homes established under this Act; and

(e) to provide after care for children and young persons under the control of the Division.

Children could be deemed in need of care and protection under the provisions of the act (s. 31) if

- found begging or receiving alms

- found wandering, abandoned or sleeping in any public place

- having no visible means of support or no settled place of abode

- in a brothel or residing in or wandering about with known or reputed thieves, drunkards, vagrants or prostitutes, whether these persons were the parents or not

- street trading if unlicensed and after due warning is given

- not provided with sufficient or proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging, or illtreated or exposed

- for taking part in a public exhibition or performance endangering life or limb

- in care and custody of a person unfit by their conduct or habits

- lapsing or likely to lapse into a career of vice or crime

- exposed to moral danger; or

- habitually absent from school without lawful excuse.

These grounds were unchanged from those contained in the *Social Welfare Act 1960*.   The whole Act, apart from including broad aims and other cosmetic changes, was similar to the 1960 Act and thus carried forward a similar philosophical position.   The Chief Secretary, in introducing the Bill into the Legislative Assembly in his second reading speech on 28th October 1970

(Victoria, Legislative Assembly, Session 1970-71, Vol. 300: 1437), noted that the previous Act was drafted so broadly that little change to its aims and provisions was required.

Some contents of the *Social Welfare Act 1970* are in considerable contrast to modern provisions (Liddell & Liddell 2000). There was a statement of principles or objectives, though these were largely concrete and instrumental rather than philosophical. Such statements are more precise in the current legislation, the *Children and Young Persons Act 1989 (CYPA 1989)*, and try to capture the philosophies underpinning the Act. For example they incorporate statements of parents' rights, which the earlier provisions did not (the *Community Welfare Services Act 1978* is a modest exception), though the *CYPA 1989* is far from clear on how conflicts between parents' and children's rights should be resolved.

The provisions under which a child can be seen as needing care and protection have also changed. The rather general 1970s provisions emphasised status offences or behaviours for which adults could not be proceeded against, and there was a heavy moral overtone to some. The provisions about being exposed to moral danger or likely to lapse into a life of vice or crime are examples. Most of the provisions targeting behaviours of children and young people have now been replaced by provisions which specify the purpose of intervention more closely. The 1970s provisions regarding acts against the child are general, referring to illtreatment or absence of specified material needs. There is no reference to physical abuse, sexual abuse (a `discovery' of the late 1970s/early 1980s), emotional abuse, or neglect, which are abuse categories used in the *CYPA 1989*. Terms like `exposed to moral danger' sometimes can be regarded as pseudonyms for sexual abuse, but their application was broader than that. Provisions like Victoria's 1970 provisions still exist or have existed until quite recently in certain states, notably Queensland and Western Australia, though each state has had its own unique variations (Liddell and Liddell 2000).

In the *Social Welfare Act 1970* there were no dispositional options if a protection application was successful other than wardship, and wardship remained in force until the child reached eighteen (with provisions for extension to twenty-one in certain circumstances). An exception existed for an application to declare the child uncontrollable, in which case additional options of adjournment or probation were available. There were provisions for discharge of wardship but these had to be actively invoked; there was no automatic review.

These legislative provisions set the context for what was later identified as `welfare drift'; that is, children remained in the system without review of their circumstances to determine what was in their best interests. There were also provisions in the 1970 legislation for parents of wards to pay maintenance (since repealed), and for direct application to the Department (not the courts) for admission to care (also since repealed).

Although Tierney's (1963) research from the early 1960s was the only substantial baseline for new developments, the crude figures on admissions to care prior to the establishment of the new Department make interesting reading. The Social Welfare Department (1970a) Annual Report on 1969-1970 figures show that there were 1,187 admissions to wardship on Protection Applications in 1969-1970. A few categories accounted for the vast majority of these:

- found wandering or abandoned (66)

- no means of support or no settled place of abode (372)

- not provided with proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid, or illtreated or exposed to moral danger (157)

- unfit guardianship (230)

- lapsing or likely to lapse into a career of vice or crime (211)

- exposed to moral danger (120).

The extent to which poverty and `immorality' were targeted under the legislation is obvious.

Shortly after its establishment the Social Welfare Department, in one of the major reforms of the decade, began the process of regionalisation (Berringer 1976). Up to that point most services were offered from Melbourne, though there were field offices, sparsely staffed, in several metropolitan and rural areas. The process took virtually all of the 1970s to complete; there was little sense of urgency. Among the benefits of regionalisation was that there were specific attempts to promote `home release' of wards. A priority system was developed in 1975 to provide services to families who could most benefit, administered through the regional centers, and a home release option could also be exercised by the reception centers (Social Welfare Department 1975). In April 1978 a new division of family and adolescent services came into existence, joining together the formerly separate functions of the family and youth welfare divisions. Most regional centers were sufficiently developed by this point to undertake many of the responsibilities of this new division, and the concept of a range of services available in each region was being articulated.

In 1970 the child protection system, though dealing with substantial numbers, was not at the heart of the child welfare field nor was it primarily a welfare process in the way it is now. The police dealt with the vast majority of child protection investigations. Figures are not easy to derive from various reports, but Police Department Annual Reports stated the number of Protection Applications pursued by the police in the Children's Court. There were 1,868 such applications for children under eight (the only figure reported) in 1970 (Police Department Victoria 1970). These were listed under the heading `Juvenile Delinquency' (a comment on the prevailing understanding of child

abuse and a throw-back to Nineteenth Century classifications of abuse) though the detail makes it clear that it was not delinquents who were referred to.

Police activity reduced to 621 Protection Applications in 1973 and 209 in 1974 (Police Department Victoria 1973 & 1974). The figure remained low, and then in 1976 (Police Department Victoria 1976) the police began to report on protection applications for all children up to age seventeen. There were 2,369 such applications in 1976. With hindsight one could partly interpret the revised presentation of these figures as an indicator of the competitiveness developing between the welfare and police functions for control of the child protection field. The Child Maltreatment Workshops had been underway since 1974; the police were represented in the Workshops and would have been aware of the growing feeling that Victoria should have a welfare-based intervention system.

There were provisions in the *Social Welfare Act 1970* for `authorisation' of persons other than the police to make investigations and apprehend children in need of care and protection. The use of this provision was confined to the professional staff of the Children's Protection Society, originally established in 1896 as the Victorian Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Its social workers and welfare workers were the only people besides the police to be authorised interveners, though apprehension of children by CPS in the 1970s was rare (Scott & Swain 2002). There was also little of what we now would call family support apart from a few embryonic and not well conceptualised programs, examples of which could be found at the Brotherhood of St. Laurence and Melbourne Family Care Organisation. There was also a small family counselling unit within the Social Welfare Department itself.

The focus of child welfare activity was on the institutions caring for children. Deinstitutionalisation had begun in the 1950s and while it progressed slowly for a number of years, the 1970s saw further development (see for example Rogers 1976). Deinstutionalisation at that stage was concerned more with the establishment of small group facilities (family group homes) rather than other alternatives, though interest in foster care was to grow during the 1970s, as was interest in family support (unauthored 1977a; unauthored 1977b; unauthored 1977c; unauthored 1977d; Thomas 1977).

There was still little research into child welfare. In perhaps the only major research of the early 1970s Leaper (1974) studied police reports on 1845 children brought before Children's Courts in Victoria in 1972. She found that 22.4% of these were proceeded against on `likely to lapse' grounds; 26.10% on exposed to moral danger grounds; 15.79% on no visible means of support grounds, 12.21 % for being in the care of an unfit person; and 11.29% for found wandering. There would be some recategorisation under modern legislation, but it is likely that many of these children would never see a Children's Court under current legislative provisions.

Leaper's (1974) analysis broke new ground in-so-far as she noted the relationship between age, sex, and grounds for the application. She

observed that 62.2% of all children proceeded against were females and only 37.8% were males. Of the females approximately 60% were aged 13-17, while only about one quarter of the males proceeded against were in this age group. The substantial reason for this imbalance related to attempts to control the sexuality of young women. Leaper noted the tendency of young men to act out differently, was highly critical of the likely to lapse and moral danger provisions, and recommended their cessation.

The *Social Welfare Act 1970* was subsequently amended in 1976 though it is far from clear that this had any immediate impact. In fact, in spite of the demise of this kind of legislation, it is arguable that child welfare systems are not much more gender sensitive now than they were then (Maunders et al. 1999; Liddell & Liddell 2000), though the trends in the figures reported by Leaper in 1974 would no longer be found. However there is no legislation in any Australian state or territory that contains an even general injunction that the child protection and child welfare systems should be sensitive to gender issues. As for the 1970s, it can be observed that Leaper's research shows the *Social Welfare Act 1970* did not produce a change in philosophy - nor could it have, given the provisions already outlined.

At another level debates commenced about family support and about children's and family rights. These were reflected in concerns about the development of family support and the need for the development of foster care. Debate was also promoted by people such as Foreman (1975, 1976). Foreman, in the context of recent legal developments and the new Family Law Act 1976, which pioneered the concept of no-fault divorce in Australia, challenged the notion of children's rights as lacking context.

> There is a need to explore an alternative, to describe and relate the duties and rights of the community, the parent and child and crystallise how they do and ought to interact and integrate.
>
> Foreman 1976: 16

Foreman did not show where such arguments might lead, and it was several years before the Child Welfare Practice and Legislative Review Committee's Review (Child Welfare Practice & Legislative Review Committee 1984) attempted to tackle this issue. Modern legislation perhaps tries to reflect this integration but evidence suggests that the balance between children's and parent's rights has not been adequately struck, and community rights are rarely on the agenda.

Though the residential care field was still called `child care', another `child care' movement was developing. The `community child care' movement (McCaughey & Sebastian 1977), promoting various forms of child care for children, was becoming active. This movement spread from its beginnings to become a vocal advocate for parents' rights, and in the 1980s developed concern for parents who became caught up in the developing child protection system.

The community child care field, with others, was also an advocate of the virtues of localism, and this emphasis was a strong policy influence in the 1970s and 1980s. The Whitlam Labor government at the national level, through its regional policies and the Australian Assistance Plan, contributed to this focus. Notions of participation and rights (stirred by the Vietnam War and movements such as those over women's and Aborigines' rights) gained ground. They were fuelled in Victoria by the Cabinet White Paper on the future direction of welfare services (Victorian Government 1978) which advocated a strong local and participatory flavour to the development of human services. Some of us were already supporting local community and self-help movements and were convinced of their contribution even in specialised fields such as child abuse. The trend was to have a major impact on child welfare in the 1980s as the movement towards localism and local management of services was picked up by the Labor Party, which put considerable pressure on agencies to conform to the principles of localism. Interestingly the 1978 White Paper had little to say about child protection, though it was not long before mounting pressure forced the then Liberal Government to develop a child protection policy.

It is a comment on the lack of coordination in welfare in those years that the *Community Welfare Services Act 1978*, which established the new Department of Community Welfare Services and substantially enacted the provisions of the White Paper, changed the grounds for protective intervention in the absence of any publicly proclaimed policy on the matter. The Liberal Party announced the details of its policy in December 1978 after the contents of the Act had been determined. The provisions of the Act did not mirror the somewhat more precise definitions to be found in more recent legislation, but they did move some distance from the general provisions which had prevailed to that point.

The provisions of the *Community Welfare Services Act 1978* applied to children under seventeen. Protective intervention (including admission to care) could be undertaken if the child or young person had been illtreated or was likely to be illtreated, or physical mental or emotional development was in jeopardy (*Community Welfare Services Act 1978*, S. 31 [1a]). Action was also mandated if the parents or guardians were unable or unwilling to provide adequate supervision or control; were dead or incapacitated and no other adults were available to care for the child; or the child was abandoned and guardians could not be found. Section 31(2) of the Act also specified that the child should not be admitted until all reasonable steps had been taken to provide services to maintain the child at home. Admission to care needed to be in the best interests of the child. One can see here the evolution of the kinds of principles which underpin current legislation. The provisions for maintaining the child at home were a statement of faith only, given the lack both of family support services and of a welfare-based child protection service. Surprisingly the `likely to lapse' provisions, removed from the 1978 Act, were reinserted the following year in the *Community Welfare Services (Amendment) Act 1979*.

Boss noted in 1977 (Boss 1977) that recent developments in child welfare in Victoria particularly focused on:

- decentralisation - the creation of eighteen regions for service delivery by the Social Welfare Department. The intention was to make services more accessible and visible and render them more sensitive to people's needs. The notion of regionalisation was viewed as particularly pertinent for large organisations to respond to, but many other agencies were also concerned with localisation and greater accessibility

- models of care; which involved moves away from congregate care towards alternatives - for example small family group homes and, tentatively, foster care

- alternatives to care.

Boss concluded that the field was `moving toward family welfare not, more narrowly, child welfare' (1977: 35). He also saw a trend towards prevention and a developmental approach featuring community development and a strengthening of community networks. A few short years later Boss's conclusions were, rightly, less positive (Boss 1980a) though one could add that, compared with the early 1970s, the general trend since has indeed been for greater emphasis on family welfare rather than child welfare.

The 1970s concluded with modest development of family support services. These were narrowly focused. Discussions I had with senior Departmental officers at the time indicated scepticism in the Department about `softer' services such as casework. The Department wished to develop and support `harder', more targeted services. The examples of these which were funded, initially by the State Government in 1976 and subsequently with federal government support (Alexander 1983), were financial counsellors, housing workers (especially for emergency accommodation), family aides and, later, women's refuges. Protests against the narrowness of this focus were in vain, though some agencies ignored it and commenced casework services (the Anglican `Careforce' programs were an example).

Gradually the limitations of this approach were realised in the early 1980s. I sat on a steering committee which oversighted an evaluation of the new family support program (Wyse 1981). What it showed clearly, with regard to family aide services to the child protection population, was that there had been a drift away from servicing the most difficult families. There was no consolation in having told the Department in advance that this would happen and that providing family aide services to these families, with no supervision or casework support, would fail.

The final major development of the 1970s was the development of a policy on child protection by both major political parties at state level and the initiation of a pilot project to develop a new child protection system by the Liberal Government. It would be fair to say that integration between family and child

welfare and the child protection system was not evident in the 1970s. The pressure for the reform of child protection involved few people from the traditional child welfare field. An indicator of the fragmentation came from directors of residential child care agencies. When I took the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (CWAV) into the child protection lobbies in 1978 several of them asked me why? Child abuse, they said, had nothing to do with them; the fact that they were caring for its victims had not registered. Consequently I am mentioning child protection here for completeness only since changes in that area occurred substantially separately from other changes.

Paper Two

Child Protection

> As implied earlier, developments in child protection occurred in isolation from other child welfare developments. It was not until the late 1970s that the first halting attempts were made to relate some of the various components of child welfare to each other.

1. Discovery and denial of child abuse in Victoria

Child abuse and the child protection system struggled for most of the 1960s and 1970s to gain attention. In Victoria the first research into the phenomenon was conducted by Drs. Robert and John Birrell and Dr. Dora Bialestock. Bialestock (1966) studied medical and police records of babies and families admitted to Allambie Reception Centre in Melbourne over twenty months. As controls she studied the records of 250 babies attending a crèche and 609 attending infant welfare centres from an inner suburban municipality of Melbourne. The crèche babies usually had one functional parent (normally an unmarried or deserted mother), while those at the infant welfare centre were largely from lower socioeconomic groups.

At the reception centre Bialestock found that two out of every three babies could be classed as `failure to thrive' - that is, their weight was below the tenth percentile - while the nutrition of the crèche and IWC babies was equal. Further she found that progress of the babies at the reception centre was not optimal, and those placed from the reception centre into babies' homes appeared no better. She quoted an example of a child returned from a babies' home to the reception centre after several months which had actually lost weight. She recommended changes to reception centres and babies homes to improve standards, and also recommended a health visitor program along U.K. lines and a Head Start (U.S.) style program. Many of the children in her reception centre sample had not attended Infant Welfare Centres prior to their admittance, suggesting that outreach programs were necessary.

The Birrells published two studies. The first (Birrell & Birrell 1966) reported on eight cases of maltreated children coming to police notice and discussed the features of maltreatment, noting the importance of the contrast between the injuries, the child's history, and the explanation of the injuries. Their second study (Birrell & Birrell 1968) looked at forty-two maltreated children identified over thirty-one months at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital. They had to actively seek out these cases since they were often not

categorised as child maltreatment nor identified as such. Again they noted the connection between physical abuse and neglect and disturbed family background. They recommended that legislative power to remove such children was needed and also noted the importance of the role of social workers.

As a result of the Bialestock and Birrell research the Chief Secretary and Minister of Health set up an Inter-departmental Committee (IDC) to investigate the allegations. The committee was set up on 13.12.1966 and reported in December 1967. Amongst its recommendations was a scheme for voluntary reporting. It also recommended action on accommodation at Allambie nursery and the registration and training of child care workers (Committee of Inquiry into Allegations of Neglect and Maltreatment of Young Children 1967). Little action followed and the Chief Secretary, Sir Arthur Rylah, was reported as saying 'How far is the general taxpayer - who looks after his own children - expected to go in looking after other people's children?' (State Parliamentary Labor Party 1978).

The Social Welfare Department's 1968 Annual Report commented rather tersely on the IDC report, saying (Social Welfare Department 1968: 32):

> Arising out of sensational headlines given to articles appearing in the Australian Medical Journal, the government appointed a committee of three to investigate and report.

The Annual Report then listed committee members and, briefly, their recommendations.

The IDC reconvened after the Birrells' second article. Their second report (Committee of Inquiry into Allegations of Neglect and Maltreatment of Young Children, Second Report, 1969) recommended a pilot research centre be established at the Royal Children's Hospital. The Second Report said it did not dispute the Birrell allegations but could not verify them because the Board of the Royal Children's Hospital would not make records available. By the time the second report was published only three of the original report's thirteen recommendations had been implemented, including voluntary reporting – which according to the 2nd Report had led to thirty-one notifications between March 1968 and 19/12/1968.

The Social Welfare Department's 1969 Annual Report recovered some political correctness and hailed the second IDC report as one of the highlights of the previous year (Social Welfare Department 1969: 5). However the rest of that Annual Report contains no further reference to the IDC's report, an indicator of the lack of enthusiasm the government had for the whole area

The recommendation on research was implemented and the research was written up in 1978, then not published until two years later (Bishop and Moore 1980) after the Opposition leaked it to the press (Boss 1980a: 86). Boss (1980a), in evaluating this research, noted its difficulty in reconciling psychological and sociological views of the child and of child abuse, a matter

he attributed to different perspectives held by the two authors of the report. The government response was that some recommendations had already been implemented and others would be studied more closely. This reaction further reflects government lack of interest, though it must be said that at that time the Social Welfare Department had no mandate to investigate allegations of child abuse in spite of the fact that it dealt with those victims who were subject to a court order. Personal communications with people close to the research conveyed the political pressure they were under and how controversial the whole matter was seen to be. Health Department personnel at the time indicated privately that during the 1970s there were instructions to Health Department staff to have nothing to do with child abuse.

Given these instructions it is important to add that some Health Department staff supported the establishment of the Child Maltreatment Workshop, largely driven by Boss, which was launched with a seminar in February 1975. It formed a number of study groups which contributed to what can still be seen as a comprehensive and forward looking report on the development of a child welfare and protection system. This process, together with extensive lobbying following the publication of the report, ultimately led to the development of a more modern child protection system in 1979; timelines which led Boss (1980a: 85) to describe Victoria as having `lagged in laying its plans for positive action'.

The Workshop Report (Child Maltreatment Workshop 1976) recommended the establishment of a child maltreatment division within the Department of Health; authorized persons in each region to supplement the role of the police; regional consultative panels; and the appointment to the Children's Courts of people with other than legal training. It advocated a comprehensive approach to the issue of child abuse, moving broader than an individual pathology approach to include structural factors. The Report was finally released in April 1977 after suggestions that the Government had suppressed its circulation.

I did not participate in the Child Maltreatment Workshop process because I was committed to the change process in residential care and family support. I returned to the child abuse campaign in 1977 when the Survival Campaign was completed

2. Lobbying and policy development

My involvement in the child protection area was limited until 1977 when it was clear that the Government had no immediate plans to act on child abuse. With Survival Committee activity completed[2], I joined a group formed by Prof. Boss, later called `WECARE', whose aim was to pressure the government to take action. WECARE was formally launched in October 1978, but before

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[2] This is a reference to a campaign (of which I was one of the major organizers) to develop an inquiry into child welfare in Victoria. See Paper Four for further details.

that Boss had established a small group of people who were meeting to monitor progress. Boss has documented the lobbying process (Boss 1980b); suffice it to say here that the action to produce government action was difficult and protracted.

While WECARE was active the Labor Party also vigorously pursued the government, targeting Hon. Walter Jona, who as Assistant Minister for Health and then as Minister for Community Welfare Services from 1979 had continuing responsibilities in the area. Labor pursued Jona with a succession of questions in the legislature, censure motions, and the like during 1978. In December 1978 it also produced a policy on child maltreatment following an enquiry set up by its parliamentary wing. Submissions were sought and the party visited other states to examine their programs.

The Victorian government announced a pilot project for the Barwon region in the 1978 Budget speech. The Pilot commenced in 1979 and almost immediately encountered problems which were to eventually prove fatal. I am assuming that the continuation of this story moves beyond what the Senate would require from this submission. I can provide further detail if required.

Paper Three

Organisational Change in Child Welfare in the Early 1970s: A Case Study

> In Paper Four I will present an examination of the process of change in a child welfare organisation from 1970 to 1975.   Before doing that I will present some context on the organisation in question.   Paper Four was written in 1975 and I think it is better to let the integrity of that paper, as written at the time, stand as such and to analyse the context as I see it now in separate publications.

The 1970s were a period of change.   Change was uncoordinated and sometimes contradictory given the different interests of key stakeholders. Some `new' developments were not new.   As indicated earlier some changes that occurred in the 1970s were pioneered in some form as early as the 19th Century, only to be abandoned.

In this chapter the objective is to examine change in this period in finer detail, recording my observations as a participant in aspects of that change.   I will concentrate initially on the process of change within my workplace then in subsequent chapters discuss system-wide changes.   There have been few attempts to describe the process of change in community organisations in that period, apart from a few brief descriptions (see for example Rogers 1976; unauthored 1977d).   This is unfortunate because such attempts have considerable interest.   The change in some organisations from orphanages to more modern services was radical.   Study of it shows the professional knowledge and values applied and how these have varied over time. Description of the change process also shows the conditions in and culture of the organisation at the time, as well as its welfare context.

Case studies can be a misleading guide to the history of their time.   The one I will present is not free of this since the organisation in question had idiosyncratic features.   There are still sound reasons for basing part of a history around such cases.   Collectively they give a picture of the times, even if individually they may skew the broad picture somewhat.   As well, although the process of change may be somewhat specific to one organisation, change occurs within a particular stage of history and must respond in part within that context.   The following account, then, shows many of the factors that characterised child welfare in the 1970s, and the way in which they impacted on one organisation and the individuals working within it.

Most of this chapter relies on a previously unpublished report I wrote at the time on changes in the organisation in question (Paper Four). Whatever flaws it may contain therefore are not the flaws of a faulty memory; the report is a record of events and my perceptions at that time. Before I refer to that report I will describe the organisation as it operated in order to place the report in context.

1. The context of the change process

I returned to Melbourne in 1970 after several years working in Canada. I decided to work for an organisation that needed change; I was unlikely to hone my change skills within a well-functioning agency. In Melbourne Family Care Organisation (MFCO) I found an organisation that needed change and acknowledged it, though the nature of the change required was not clear to management. MFCO's sound financial basis seemed to enhance the opportunities for change.

I underestimated the difficulty of the task. I was dismayed at what I found in residential child care. My organisation, which had run an orphanage since 1851 and by 1970 had fourteen family group homes that had replaced the orphanage, had a reputation for being odd. I found its rigid administration difficult to deal with; the details that follow will illustrate why.

Events soon led me to concentrate on reform of the residential child care system. My work in family support, where I was initially employed, was not a significant influence in organisational or system-wide change. The demands of the residential care system became overwhelming. I concluded that I could do little about family support until the residential care system was both healthier and reduced in size. As well, early attempts to introduce community work and group work into family support foundered through lack of experienced staff, and I kept a fledgling casework program going while staff grew in skill in that area. The main success, as far as innovations were concerned, was in our support of the self-help group Parents Anonymous, but I managed that myself. At the end of 1974 we were able to appoint a manager of the family support program and this relieved me of the day-to-day responsibility for it.

Nevertheless examples from my initial experiences in the family support program will illustrate the challenges the change process would face. I joined the MFCO family support program late in 1970 (subsequently taking over responsibility for residential care in 1972). In 1970 the family support program contained only three social work staff including myself, a small caseload (which contained the remnants of an adoption program), and an emergency relief component. Although it had been reduced from a total of nine staff in 1967 it still maintained a Melbourne-wide focus. I made home visits which, including interviewing time, consumed virtually a whole day on one client interview.

The program targeted families that were regarded as `at risk' of abusing their children, though those terms were not used then. This was the era when one referred to `multi-problem families'. Financial relief was provided in the form of food parcels, organised by the former orphanage Matron. She lived on the premises of the new Headquarters and was found a role in buying food and other supplies for the group homes and also in organising the food parcels. This is an example of how organisations, in the process of change, can carry irrelevant aspects of their history with them. Whole fields can do the same.

The Executive Director, who was not a welfare professional, had a tradition of sending correspondence direct to the clients.[3] These letters sometimes contained congratulations on progress made, but they were frequently critical. If, for example, it was believed that a family receiving a food parcel was simultaneously spending money on alcohol, the Director would send a letter reminding the family of its obligations and threatening cessation of assistance if the family's spendthrift ways continued. Having been familiar with a different style of family support in Canada, I was struck both by the moralising tone of these exchanges and by the unusual standard of confidentiality which prevailed in the organisation. The process of informing the Director that such correspondence was necessary involved several administrative staff, including the Director, reading all case files. I had no problem with being accountable, but my view of confidentiality was heavily conditioned by the principle that knowledge of client affairs should be on a `need to know' basis.

One of the first recommendations I had approved was to dispense with the food parcels, replacing them with cash assistance, and I persuaded the new Executive Director to cease sending mailed lectures. I had his rapid cooperation.

Another example of the organisation's style was its `Regular Reminders'. These were written directions on how staff should handle virtually any situation it could be anticipated they might encounter. Some Reminders were circulated weekly, or fortnightly, or monthly; some every three or six months. I would leave the office on a home visit and find, on returning, a pile of them on my desk. My recollection is that someone was employed half time to type them (these were the days of carbon paper, before the ready availability of photocopiers or computers).

I tried to wear this system down, feeling its implied attack on my capacity to act professionally. I made slow progress until an occasion when I was Acting Director. I left the office one day on a visit to a client to find, on my return, a Regular Reminder written from myself as Director to myself as Director. I informed myself that if I were to see one of the local children playing on the five-acre headquarters grounds I was to see that child and advise him/her to leave immediately. If the child was uncooperative I was to call the police.

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[3] In 1970 the then Executive Director had been a child care worker at MFCO, and progressed through the ranks to his position, which he had assumed a few months before I joined MFCO. The systems referred to here had been set up by the previous Executive Director.

My outrage on reading this was protracted, and I learned that the occasional outburst could have a constructive impact, as can the knowledge that one is capable of it. The Regular Reminders decreased in number from that point.

The final example relates to the layout of the main headquarters building. The Matron lived in on the property; so did some other staff who played management roles in the family group home system. These included the Director, the Assistant Director, the Officer-in-Charge of the group homes, two group home supervisors, and two relieving child care workers. Some of these staff occupied individual houses; others had individual rooms and shared communal facilities. None of this was necessary for the administration of the new system; it further exemplified how old traditions could be carried unnecessarily into the present.

The headquarters building was laid out in a long rectangle containing two wings, with the reception area between them. There was a corridor running down the centre of each wing and staff offices were located on each side of that corridor. All offices, with the exception of the Executive Director's (hidden at one end behind heavy wood panelling), were glass-walled. Anyone walking from one end of the building to the other could see at a glance what all staff were doing. The then Assistant Director, who was in charge of business activities and had an office close to one end of the building, would go to the toilet at the other end of the building at regular intervals, each morning and afternoon. What made this schedule of note was the fact that he had a toilet virtually right outside his door.

Current staff, most of who had been there for years, thought the building had been designed so that surveillance was possible. They were probably right; surveillance certainly appeared to be carried out. I ignored it until I encountered one or two instances where staff, under the stress of the job, broke down in my office. It was not tolerable that this could be obvious to the whole organisation. I successfully petitioned for curtains around my office, a trend that gradually spread. I did not continue the toilet patrol when I became Assistant Director.

In time I discovered that while some of these systems were peculiar to MFCO, authoritarian leadership was common in residential care. I associated this with the historical `father' or `mother' role of the orphanage superintendent or matron. It was also commonplace for the senior manager to have been in that position for years, and to have `grown up' through the system - progressing, perhaps from child care worker to superintendent, as had happened with MFCO's new Director. Senior staff in residential care organisations were sometimes teachers, but their background was frequently in administration. Training in human service administration, or experience in other areas of the human services, was virtually unknown. Most organisations had difficulty in managing teenagers but rarely understood the nature of those problems, their aetiology or treatment strategies. Management, then, frequently featured the use of authority but not an understanding of its limitations.

In some respects MFCO's ideas were ahead of their time. The quite sound financial situation was partly a product of several changes of location. This had involved the selling of prime land the organisation had been granted to establish or relocate orphanages. The sale of these facilities, when it occurred, was followed by investments usually in commercial property. This provided a sound financial footing beyond the comprehension and experience of most people in welfare. It is likely though that these factors interacted to produce a combination of suspicion, envy, and condescension from outsiders.

I noted earlier that I joined the organisation with a mandate to introduce change. I was not a free agent; there were processes of accountability to the Executive Director and Committee of Management. But there was an atmosphere of acceptance that change must occur even if the organisation was not clear what that change might involve. I was fortunate during the early 1970s to have the support of the Director and the Committee of Management in most of what was needed. What I lacked was comprehension of why I was advocating certain changes. The Committee of Management had uncritical pride in the organization's work and its history.[4] They understood that many of the children had emotional difficulties needing special handling, but they never comprehended why the children had problems and what the organisation's systems had contributed to them. Whenever I raised the matter the response was to deny that such well-meaning people could damage children in their care (I learned in time that such characteristics were common in other child welfare agencies).

Not that communication was easy. I had no direct line of communication to the Committee of Management and relied on the Director to interpret what I wanted. I had occasional communication with the `Ladies Committee'[5], whose role will be referred to in Paper Four. Meetings were stilted, formal, and not conducive to open communication.

When I was Acting Director and functioned as Secretary to the Committee of Management I found the same environment, even more formal if possible. Business was conducted efficiently and promptly, but with little discussion. There was no use of given names; everyone was referred to as `Mr.' or `Mrs.'.[6] So although the Director obtained permission for virtually everything

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[4] Sheila Bignell, an historian whose work is referred to in my thesis (Bignell 1973), was a member of the committee.

[5] The `Ladies Committee' had some similarities to a Policy Sub-committee. However its main focus was on the domestic arrangements within the family group homes (furnishings, appliances, renovations, etc.) rather than broader policy issues. One of the changes I introduced to promote normalisation was to shift this role to the house parents, where it belonged. Jaggs (1991) notes that the Committee was still affected by limitations on its role introduced in the 1960s, so the changes I introduced, necessary and logical as they were, were not accepted with any enthusiasm and had a flow-on impact on my popularity (see Paper I, p. 11, footnote 9).

[6] This convention also operated at the staff level. I dispensed with such formality from my own staff, but through most of the organisation staff were referred to by their titles, though I was permitted to call the Director by his first name when we met privately.

we wanted to do there was little growth in comprehension of the issues by the policy makers.

Since I obtained most of the decisions I wanted the communication problems were not a significant barrier at first; the consequences appeared a few years later.   But it was never possible to have an open debate about the role of voluntary agencies, the fact that residential care was a diminishing field and that family support was the way of the future, and that we needed to prepare for change.   Over the period 1973-1976 I managed to reduce the group homes from fourteen to ten and the number of children in care from over eighty to around fifty with no broad mandate for that general trend.   Each reduction had to be dealt with by the Committee as an isolated issue.   Mostly I argued for reductions on the basis of staff stress created by dealing with so many disturbed children – an honest argument in itself but one presented partly because it was difficult to convince the agency that change had to happen anyway.

By the time submissions to the Child Care Enquiry in 1975 were prepared I was tired from the effort that had gone into organisational change, and frustrated that little progress in changing the agency's policy climate had occurred.   There was an insufficient basis for considering policy and program directions now that we were making life better for the children in our care.   I wrote a submission to the Enquiry that became a vehicle to think through the lessons we had learned.   I decided it was also a means to raise issues with the organisation itself.

I am far from certain now this was the best strategy.   The Committee did not try to stop the transmission of the report but its disappointment in it was made clear to me.   There was no challenge to the accuracy of anything it contained; but what was plain was that I was seen to have been too open.   Interestingly this is an entirely different interpretation to the one presented many years later by Jaggs (1991: see Paper Four for more detail).

The material in the submission described the change process we undertook and also reflected some of the issues in child welfare in the early 1970s.   It is not an example of a further successful contribution to change.   Nor, when I subsequently read the Enquiry Report, did I see evidence that many of my concerns were picked up by the Enquiry.

My report to the enquiry was constrained in what it said out of respect for sensitivities internal to MFCO, although it can be said with hindsight that much of what it did contain was provocative.   Both during and following the report I will add detail and comments, in part on matters the report did not contain.

While MFCO had some idiosyncratic features, as the earlier examples show, many of the problems we had to deal with were also typical of problems facing residential child care at the time.   The submission shows:

- the conditions in one residential care system at the time

- the enormous number of administrative and child care issues which had to be solved and how these interacted. For example, much of the ordering and buying took place centrally, especially through a central store run at the Headquarters (a not uncommon strategy in residential care). Amongst the consequences were that house parents had little autonomy and the children had enormous limitations on the range of normal experiences they had since, for example, they could not purchase their own clothes at a normal store. To change this we had to establish allowances for children and budgets for the group homes, and cost these properly. Then we had to set up adequate financial and delegation systems, in an organisation that had been and continued to be highly centralised. The effort was huge and the stresses were high. Although I did not say this in the submission, I had recruited some staff who were tough because the situation required it. More than once some of them took the stresses out on each other

- the extent to which children had become isolated from their families, mainly it appears from system-related problems such as lack of family support and Departmental policy to obtain maintenance from parents. This was a common phenomenon; MFCO was not alone in dealing with it. We attempted a strategy, unknown at the time, of devoting one staff member's time to tracking down families, with virtually no success

- the extent to which children who had come from problematic backgrounds had their problems exacerbated by the lack of normal experiences together with the highly authoritarian administration – an authoritarianism out of tune with the times. We had to establish a treatment-oriented system to cope with the children's problems. The increased cost of this per child was worth it, given the good results, but did not exactly endear me to the Committee of Management (see footnotes to Paper Four)

- the large numbers of teenagers who were disturbed. Specific programs and facilities had to be established for some and in the process we set up arguably the first long-term after care program in Victoria, based on the logic that the date the children were discharged from wardship or left the group home had no relationship to their need for support. We followed groups of them through various changes of residence and with different kinds of support until they were ready to cope. Such a `sensible' strategy, still not routinely practiced in child welfare in Victoria, required policy change internally; funding support from the agency (Department policy did not support it); allocation of staff; and challenges to the Department itself. Every program development – some of them radical in the context of the times – involved policy changes, program changes, funding implications, and changes to management systems. Every change had flow-on effects; every change was a challenge – sometimes implicitly a criticism – to people who were identified with the old ways of doing things. In this

sense residential systems may be the hardest of all to change.   See paper Four for the text of the submission.

Paper Four

Organizational change in child care: a case study

This paper contains the text of a submission I wrote to the Committee of Enquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria in 1975. It contains impressions written at the time on the process of change we had gone through at MFCO.   Paper Three provided context for the submission.   I have further comments on the process of change which I did not include in the submission at the time.   Rather than `contaminate' the original submission I have added these impressions as footnotes.

The paper contains, in a lightly edited form, material included in a submission to the Committee of Enquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria in 1975.   As such it has not been published previously.   The source of information about events in the 1960s was from Annual Reports and interviews with staff. Material from the 1970s came from documented experiences of staff, including myself, and my own observations (which I recorded in note form over the years).   When the material was written my reflections on the organisation's history and problems were not informed by Donna Jaggs' (1991) history of MFCO[7].   Much of what Jaggs wrote supports my conclusions about the 1960s, though not all of my views on the 1970s, as the text shows, were uncontroversial. I will elaborate later in this paper.   Through the paper I have added comments to clarify certain issues or to add comments which at the time I decided not to include in the report.

1.   Introduction

The history of welfare in Victoria is very much bound up with the history of its children's institutions, dating back as they do to the 1850s. Melbourne Family Care Organization is the oldest of these institutions. A study of the history of them is a revealing exercise. For the purpose of a submission to the Enquiry, it is not the intent to make a full study of our history.   It is more pertinent for current purposes to examine briefly the history of the organization since the

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[7] Jaggs, D. (1991) **From Asylum to Action,** Family Action, Melbourne.

early 1960s. Melbourne Family Care Organization has been through many stages which other organizations are only now going through. It has tried many things which still are regarded as being new developments. Therefore it is important to describe and attempt an evaluation of these things in order to learn lessons for the future.

In the 1950s the Committee of Management of the then Melbourne Orphanage came to the conclusion that the orphanage concept was not meeting the needs of children in care. In particular, children appeared to be missing out on the benefits of family life. The concept of small, scattered cottages as an alternative to congregate care had only become popular overseas in the 1950s, and only a few other organizations were considering such developments in Victoria. The decision was made to investigate the cottage idea, and three cottages were designed and built. This convinced the Committee of the viability of the notion. Fourteen houses were subsequently built or purchased and occupied, and the shift from orphanage to scattered group homes was completed by early 1963. The whole operation was clearly a highly complex one from all points of view - childcare, administration, and financial. The latter in particular seems to have been managed with considerable finesse.

The concept of a family welfare agency which was held at Melbourne Family Care Organization in the first half of the 1960s was a broad one. Fourteen cottages catered for a total of approximately one hundred children in care. Two of these houses catered for emergency placements. The agency also developed and maintained foster placements. In 1963 it became a registered adoption agency. Underpinning these activities was the development of its Social Work Department with its provision of counselling and financial assistance. At its peak in 1967 this section employed nine Social Workers.

Annual and other reports indicate during these years that there was a strong philosophical commitment to key underlying principles. In some areas this was developed in detail. Concepts of after-care, prevention, the importance of home release, the use of holiday placements and holiday camps, the screening of holiday hosts - and the necessity of providing enough resources to do these jobs - these items indicate a breadth of ideas and a breadth of services which was rare in Victoria in those days. As the work increased in depth and relationships between staff and children intensified in the new setting, there was increased recognition of the extent of the problems which the children had. This led to the appointment of more specialist staff. An Education Officer was appointed in 1969, and a part-time staff member whose job was solely to arrange holiday placements (over Christmas normally, when child care staff took holidays) was appointed in 1970. The need for evaluation of services was apparent, and a `Recording Officer' was appointed in 1970, with the hope of getting more qualified research staff at a later date.[8]

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[8] A signal that the organisation put appearances ahead of good planning was that this person had no job description, and told me when I asked what she did that she did not know what she was employed for or what she was doing. She left soon after I joined the organization.

Yet these latter moves, important though they were subsequently to be, coincided with the end of an era of development rather than signalling a new one. Few fresh developments occurred in the late 1960s, in contrast with what went before. Annual Reports gave a very sketchy idea of what was really happening. Insofar as they were specific, they indicated from 1967 on a growing concern with the problem of dealing with children who were disturbed. Financial matters became pressing. Fostering, adoptions, counselling all diminished. By 1970 there were only two Social Workers left. No social work services were being provided to the Family Group Homes at all. A mood of gloom pervaded official utterances. It contrasts sharply with the mood of the early 1960's and their buoyant optimism, unlimited ideas, confidence and financial security.

What went wrong?

1.1   The Problems of the 1960s

The boundaries of this admittedly unscientific enquiry must be established at the outset. My intent is to analyse the question for its significance in terms of the organizational processes involved, both then and since, and to refer to the broader issues in the welfare context which impinged on developments. Although some of the core conclusions reached can be verified by staff and Committee of Management who were with the organization in those days, one inevitably must jump to conclusions which cannot be verified.

It is not my intention to examine the impact of individual personalities within the organization on this process.[9] Apart from the obvious dangers as well as impertinence of doing this in such a report, the risks of jumping to unwarranted conclusions must be even higher. But above all, the purpose of the analysis is to draw conclusions for the future which are of assistance not only to Melbourne Family Care Organization but to other organizations which will embark on similar processes of change. The process of change, necessary as it is, will be a highly complex and problematic one, both for the field as a whole and for the individual agencies which must change.

The problems which caused a reduction and dislocation in programs are interrelated and to an extent it distorts them to examine them individually. With this in mind, I believe the major strands to look at are:

1.2   Normal processes

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[9] In making the point about individual personalities I was cognizant of the fact that it would be obvious to anyone knowledgeable about the agency that an analysis which ignored the impact of personalities would lack credibility. The rigidity with which the agency had been run was well known and an analysis which was only structural would leave aside the quite critical impact that individuals had had on the development of that rigidity. I felt it necessary to convey that I understood that while not straying onto this difficult ground.

One frequently observes the tremendous impact which a change of program has within an organization. Tensions there are aplenty, but keen and dedicated staff bring much energy, enthusiasm and application to the new task. When the issue is as complete a change as the change from orphanage to scattered group homes, and when it is associated with the feeling that the venture is so important and innovative that one is literally on centre stage, the feeling can be quite heady.

This seems a fair description of Melbourne Family Care Organization in the early 1960s, and it was reinforced by the obvious appreciation of the children, or most of them, for the changes.[10] And that, of course, was what it was all about. This too is typical of organizational process. As such, it has its dangers. It is this stage which enables normally level-headed people to claim that high-rise flats solve delinquency, and then at another stage in history claim that they create it. It enables organizations to employ professionals for the first time, and then pretty soon to claim that this has solved all their problems - only to claim at another time that it has created them. It may take a number of years for this "honeymoon" period to really disappear and for harsh realities to become so pressing that they can no longer be ignored.

The fact, then, that Melbourne Family Care went through a period of buoyancy and expansion, followed by problems and dissension, can be viewed as normal or typical. One also hopes that its excesses are avoidable if one knows these are likely to happen. But this does suggest that processes which sustain change through this roller-coaster ride are required.

1.3   Policy Development

By some criteria, the policies and range of services offered by Melbourne Family Care Organization in the early 1960s fulfilled many of the expectations one would have of a modern agency offering services to troubled children and families. As such they were being developed considerably in advance of their time in Victoria. Genuinely multi-function agencies are a relatively recent development in Victoria, at least as we now know them. One is tempted to look back and speculate on whether they were too far ahead of their time. Staff capable of operating in or thinking within those conditions were quite rare then - as far as social work is concerned, they still are. With regard to external pressures, it must be difficult to operate a multi-function agency in an atmosphere not conducive to it. Agency committee and staff of those days attest to the difficulty of maintaining a range of services in the face of pressure

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[10] This view was not universally shared by the children. One dissenter was Ivan Durant, controversial local artist and best known for dumping the carcass of a cow on the steps of the National Gallery of Victoria, in the name of art. His view, shared at a conference we both addressed in the mid-1970s, was that he had liked the orphanage. It was anonymous; a place children could hide. He did not like the more intimate group home atmosphere which forced relationships on children that they might not want. His view applies to some other children; it is a reason why foster care, as the current example, does not work for some children

from the Social Welfare Department to take more and more children into long-term care.

One would therefore predict that in the light of such factors the possessors of far-sighted policies would be doomed to much frustration, which they clearly were.

Perhaps it is fair to say that apparently far-sighted policies can really be short-sighted. In some ways this appears to be true of Melbourne Family Care Organization. The two main charges against the policies of the 1960's are firstly that they were founded on a shaky philosophical basis, and secondly that for a multi-function agency, some very critical functions were left out as a result of this shaky philosophy.

In short, one sees little evidence of a clearly thought out philosophy of what the voluntary agency is or should be about – a lack which made us entirely normal. There was no clear idea of what the Government should be responsible for, or what voluntary agencies should be responsible for. As a result, there was no worked out philosophy regarding contractual/financial relationships with the Government. There was no consistent philosophy of challenge to the existing patterns of service within the welfare field. There was a strong commitment to the development and pioneering role of the agency in new services, but this was largely an individual effort. The agency was more than willing to share its knowledge and experience, but rarely appeared to actually plan with either this, or the impact of its efforts on others, clearly in mind and allowed for. As a result, its role in evaluation of its efforts developed only late in the 1960s, and apparently as a partial result of difficulties arising in many of the programs. Evaluation was tacked on to the rest of the program and never became really an integrated part of the agency's efforts. The agency operated in isolation and this apparently helped contribute to its negative image.

Philosophical commitments, as one reads them (or into them) from old reports, have a strong flavour of commitment to providing for children against a background of strong religious commitment and certainty in the knowledge that we were doing "good works". Growth in the agency's endeavours was strongly publicized in the early 1960's. Cut-backs were sometimes not even really acknowledged as such - publicly at any rate. Like most agencies, there seems to have been a strong identification with the size of the program as a demonstration of the agency's worth.

Against this background, cutbacks in programs occurred in the late 1960s, and many programs were in trouble for other reasons. Given the philosophical commitments of the agency and its staff, these must have been extraordinarily difficult to tolerate. The fact that even then so little regard was given to the context in which they occurred makes one suspect that they were reacted to as personal failings on the part of staff involved - perhaps Committee too.

1.4   Finances

Melbourne Family Care Organization could probably have been forgiven for feeling, in the early 1960's, that it was unlikely ever to be in serious financial difficulty. To an extent this is still true. Wise management and an element of good fortune has ensured that the agency is always likely to have a core of assured income, though the real worth of that income will vary according to the current economic conditions. But the early 1960's, with the sale of the Brighton Orphanage, heralded a new era of expansion which must have been virtually unprecedented in the history of voluntary agencies in Victoria. Cuts in numbers of children in care originally occurred in efforts to improve standards.   Yet within five years of the move from Brighton, extensive program cuts began - mainly by not replacing Social Workers as they left. By 1970 the so-called Preventive Service was a shadow of its former self. One can only speculate on the impact of these developments on the architects of the previous expansion - it must have come as a tremendous blow. It must have been difficult to reconcile such service cuts with the ideals and commitments which had been espoused through the 1960s.

Inflation was, of course, a major contributor to the economic problems. The intrusion of Wages Boards - especially those of Social Workers, and the extension of the Hospitals & Benevolent Homes Wages Board - had a major impact. One suspects, from watching the current impact of the Child Care Workers' Determination, that the first intrusion of Wages Boards into agencies which valued the dedication rather than pecuniary interest of their staff, must have had considerable psychological as well as financial impact.

1.5   Staffing & Staff Training

Given that program cuts had to occur, it still could have been an open question as to what aspects of the programs were cut.   Given the organization's growing pride in its "preventive work" one might wonder why, when cuts were necessary, they did not occur in the residential work. The agency's traditional connections with residential work are not sufficient in themselves to explain this. Since Social Work was the big gainer and the big loser at Melbourne Family Care in the 1960's, it is important to examine why this was so.

While this paper is not meant to be a treatise on Social Work, it is important to allude briefly to the nature of Social Work in the 1960s. Social Work was, in a real sense, only just coming into its own in the 1960s. It was still liable to be confused with social/charitable works emanating from Toorak[11] mansions, while its claim to in-depth mastery of human relations skills and psychological theories lent it an aura of mystique and led to considerable suspicion.

The focus of social work skill was in improving the social adjustment of people.   In the 1960s Social Work was busy cornering the market on certain

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[11] Toorak was and still is a very wealthy Melbourne suburb.

jobs which allegedly required social work skills and only social work skills. The process was exacerbated by at least two major facts. One was that there were insufficient social workers to go around, and the other was that they were replacing or stepping over people from a variety of backgrounds, especially clerical, who had been doing welfare work for years. The 1960s, then, was a period of intense rivalry between administrative and social work staff in welfare agencies. One must add that the Social Workers were quite unprepared by their training to deal with the organizational complexities with which they were confronted, and their naivety tended to reinforce the prevailing view that professional do-gooders were a nuisance and had to be contained. Thus, when program cuts had to be considered at Melbourne Family Care, social workers seemed more expendable than other staff.[12]

A considerable amount of emphasis is placed in the reports of the 1960s about staff training activities at Melbourne Family Care. Yet, when they are looked at in detail, the examples given are ones like training in decimal currency, business courses, property management - vital to certain aspects of the organization's work, but not supportive of the professional tasks being undertaken. One report in the late 1960s virtually gives the game away when it expresses the opinion that house parents really did need some understanding of the emotional needs of children if they were to do the job. Yet this was not acted on. The apparently limited view of the training needs of staff through much of the 1960s contrasts sharply with the breadth of the vision of service development. It suggests that the service developments themselves were inadequately understood, and that this may have contributed to the demise of some of them.

1.6 Internal Integration and Co-ordination

A review of our services in 1970 and administration, conducted by myself when I joined the organisation, shows that the different components of the organization's operations were controlled and functioned quite separately from each other. It is difficult in determine whether the glue which had held it together was constituted by the components that had been cut, or whether things had always been that way, but it seems that internal coordination was always largely absent. Because there is evidence to suggest that many of the implications of the programs were not foreseen, it may not be too harsh to also suggest that the parts which went to make up the whole were not properly co-ordinated either. Melbourne Family Care Organization in those

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[12] In retrospect this analysis perhaps underestimated the strength of the agency's commitment to residential care. Social workers were not the `tradition-bearers' at MFCO. The real carriers of the agency traditions and philosophies were Committee of Management members, whose commitments were to residential work. Some members of the Committee had been members for many years, and had relatives who had been Committee members before them. If vacancies occurred on the Committee and I was consulted, I recommended outsiders with different expertise who sometimes were appointed and who did add different views. However the strength of the traditional values did not allow change to occur rapidly. Members of the Committee continued, as frequently happens, to recruit new members from their own networks - people with a commitment to existing values.

days possessed administrative skill of the highest order. What it required in addition was the welfare insight and experience and conceptual ability to operate and administer programs of high complexity. The opportunity to develop such skills is not readily available even now.

1.7   Authoritarian Administration

The welfare field, and especially social workers, were wont to talk in great detail in the early 70s about the extraordinarily rigid and bureaucratic style with which Melbourne Family Care Organization was run. Observation indicates that this in fact had been the case for a considerable time, especially in the late 1960s. There is plenty of evidence of the tensions which arise in bureaucracies (and Melbourne Family Care was a bureaucracy, albeit a small one) which employ large numbers of professionals. There is also evidence to suggest that highly centralized decision-making processes have only limited application in complex problem situations such as welfare produces. It is likely then that the managerial style of the era was in fact counterproductive to the extensive aims of the organization.

It must be conceded that this style was, if not caused by, at least a response to the fact that the organization had its share of less than competent professionals. Observation of current congregate care institutions suggests too that such a style is less dysfunctional on the institutional campus (assuming the institution does little else but run an institution). In fact, the Superintendent, because of his "father" type role in the situation, probably gets away with a lot more authoritative behaviour than he might anywhere else, and perhaps that is not all bad. The leadership style then, in orphanage days, might have worked fairly well. It may have become inappropriate only as the services offered grew in breadth and complexity.

It must also be noted that during the 1960s major changes occurred in the attitudes of Australian society as a whole. It became much more acceptable to express dissent in a variety of ways. The generation of young adults became far less accepting of traditional authority and more inclined to question decisions and the basis on which they were made. While this phenomenon has never reached in Australia the dimensions it has in, say, North America, it has been a factor to be reckoned with. In short, the authoritarian leadership style is simply less socially acceptable than it used to be.

The solution, unfortunately, is just not as simple as abandoning authoritarian styles and embracing democratic ones. Many of the functions of modern agencies, especially complex ones, are standardised or routine, or contain many precedents upon which decisions need to be based. Melbourne Family Care Organization for example, has fund-raising activities based on the operation and review of investment properties. Democratic leadership of the degree required by welfare programs is simply inappropriate for the effective

carrying out of such tasks. Agencies may well, therefore, require different leadership styles for different tasks.[13]

The above notes, speculative though they may be, are not simply of historical or academic interest. They are, rather, testimony to the problems which can develop in welfare agencies when certain approaches are used and certain things are done. I have speculated at length, because the last 10 - 15 years of our history is very relevant to the future. The agency of the future, it is being said, is the multi-function agency, and in many ways I have no quarrel with that. We have too many specialist agencies which, by segmenting the problems people bring to them, are rendering inappropriate service. But in the child care field especially, we have an abundance of specialist agencies with authoritarian leadership styles. They also have vague but splendid hopes for the future which include the recently discovered fact that the child welfare field is in fact a part of the broader family welfare field; with a new realization that you need professionals, and especially social workers, to do things but with little understanding of how you use them. All of this, and more, is set against the background of a fuzzy commitment to the kind of voluntarism which has led many of them close to bankruptcy.

Solutions are not easy to come by. They have something to do with adequate planning in the welfare field as a whole - a plan for overall development to which agencies can relate meaningfully. They have something to do with adequate training of people for the jobs they are performing. We need more professional administrators and professional professionals, and fewer amateurs in either role. We need standards - and standards which relate not only to the child care workers but all relevant staff. Within voluntary agencies we need clear ideas about what voluntarism means and how it should affect what we do. Internally, we need an understanding of programs, how they run, and their requirements for resources, training, and other supports. We need programs which are properly conceptualised and coordinated. We need management styles which are appropriate to the tasks being carried out. Underlying all this, we need an understanding that the structures and processes which supported us in the past may not be appropriate for the future we are trying to build.

At Melbourne Family Care Organization we are at the point of redeveloping the multi-function concept within the agency. We see other agencies beginning to do the same thing. We also are realizing that we could repeat history by repeating past mistakes. We are therefore searching for answers to some of the questions raised here. We would hope that the Enquiry, in developing a blueprint for the future of the field, would also take these problems into account because it is predictable that many of them will confront other agencies.

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[13] The issue about matching management styles to the tasks at hand seemed obvious and I felt that the whole field would continue historical mistakes if it was not recognized. I was probably naïve to think that the point would be readily understood, given that the research evidence on the matter was still being accumulated and was not widely disseminated. In any case this view is still far from universally shared.

Regarding the philosophical underpinnings to the whole process, some work has been done. I have written a paper entitled "Philosophy and Practice in Program Planning in Voluntary Welfare Agencies" explores many of these issues and suggests ways of handling them. Its status at Melbourne Family Care is that of a discussion paper only, and it may well undergo considerable modification as it receives detailed examination.

2.　Developments in the 1970s

The situation then, in 1970, was that while the residential care program remained at its former strength, much of the professional support had disappeared. The then Social Work Department was reduced to two Social Workers supervised by the Senior Social Worker. Departments operated quite separately. The Social Work Department offered little or no professional support to the residential care program, while the latter did not admit children from the "preventive" program who might need residential care. All admissions came from Allambie (the children's reception centre). The results of a recent history of very centralized decision-making process were in evidence. In the Social Work Department consultation to staff was provided by the Senior Social Worker (myself), but decisions were frequently questioned at first by senior management. Few decisions of any importance escaped this additional process of review, and no financial assistance at all could be given without the Director's permission. Even then, cash could not be given - the alternatives were that bills could be paid directly for clients, or food parcels could be given.

Within the Family Group Home stream similar strictures prevailed. Some strange things happened in the name of promoting family-like conditions. House Parents were not permitted to have alcohol in the Family Group homes. Houses were administered completely in isolation, and House Parents were not supposed to know each other. Centralized decision-making was the norm - from minor financial decisions to decisions regarding employment and accommodation for children leaving care. The latter could be farcical, considering the way teenagers operate, but the fantasy existed that all decisions were made at the top.[14]

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[14] I did not consider it wise to say so in the original submission - though why it would have been less provocative than some of the things I did say I am not sure in retrospect - but a structure which required attention was the `Ladies' Committee', a sub-committee of the Committee of Management. It was responsible for all decisions related to furnishings and equipment in the family group homes. Many hours were devoted by the members to this task. Such structures were typical ones in residential care agencies in those days. The fact that the making of such domestic decisions by the Ladies' Committee contradicted the policy of normalisation of the homes seemed not to have occurred to anyone. It was long hard work to develop a budget system within which such decisions could be delegated to the group home staff. Jaggs (1991) makes the point that the Committee was quite unhappy about the traditional roles it lost to professional staff in the 1960s. I was unaware of this at the time, or I might have processed the matter somewhat differently. What I did was to remove the last vestiges of the Committee's role in service delivery, thus completing its move to a more

A further problem was that the quality of existing staff was quite uneven. The agency had strong contacts within the field of residential child care and was reasonably well regarded. Even there, the aura of "wealthy agency" was perceived negatively, and in the broader family welfare field the agency had a distinctly "oddball" reputation because of some of the items mentioned in this paper. My attitude to this matter, then and now, was that while this reputation was well deserved, 90 per cent of the rest of the welfare agencies in town deserved it equally. It seemed a little strange that Melbourne Family Care Organization was singled out for the amount of venom it received. Later I came to the conclusion that at that time the welfare field needed its scapegoats, just as the scapegoating family needs the scapegoated child.

The next sections will deal with developments in the agency from 1970 to 1975, more or less as they happened. I will then go back and examine these developments in the light of the six major strands which were examined in the study of the period 1961 to 1970.

In 1971 the Director and I concentrated upon the Social Work Department, as it was then called. Decentralization of considerable decision-making power to the Senior Social Worker and staff occurred, and gradually a set of comprehensive policies developed to guide the Department's programs. Services were redeveloped to enable the development of group programs, especially services to self-help groups, and to provide consultation to other groups and organizations. The geographic area which the Department served was cut to take in the cities immediately surrounding Waverley (in contrast to the Melbourne-wide focus which existed till then). Committees were joined in order to increase our connectedness with the rest of the field, and a heavy round of visits to agencies to publicize our services was undertaken.[15]

In 1972 a period of consolidation of these developments was undertaken, with heavy emphasis on staff development to back up the new programs. The biggest problem encountered then, and in the succeeding years, was staff recruitment. Staff applying for jobs seemed to be either completely unsuitable or completely inexperienced. To some extent this was a problem we shared

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`modern role' in policy formation and budget management. We successfully accomplished delegation to staff in time, but my popularity with the Committee was not enhanced.

[15] An issue I did not include in the submission - it was of peripheral significance and I did not think it wise to pursue it - was that MFCO had been a registered adoption agency. One of my first tasks was to examine the program and to finalise a small number of adoptions which were still pending. During those days there were many small adoption programs in Victoria. When I saw what ours was like I developed major concerns about the quality of adoption programs in Victoria. Given what we now know of child welfare up to the 1970s, and in case my reticence to be explicit is misunderstood, I must record that I never suspected that the MFCO adoption program involved sexual exploitation of children. However there seemed to be an unusually high proportion of our children placed with a particular, and small, church group. I was concerned about whose interests were being served by the program. In any case it was far too small (completing only several adoptions per year at best) for any quality base to be established. An early decision was made to withdraw from the adoptions field.

with other organizations. In addition we suffered from other disabilities - a bad reputation, an outer-suburban location, and voluntary auspices.   The lack of career opportunities in voluntary agencies must act as a deterrent to capable people.   [As an aside, I feel that the Social Workers' Wages Board, to compensate for this problem, must take the lead in establishing pace-setting conditions instead of, in the main, simply following the Commonwealth conditions.]

As a result, we attempted to build innovations on our core program of counselling with a very inexperienced staff. The program failed to maintain its rate of growth after I assumed responsibilities for the Family Group Homes at the end of 1972. Less of my time went into the development of the Social Work Department. Existing staff were, in the main, unready to maintain this growth themselves. In retrospect, then, we tried to do too much too fast. Finances permitted the splitting of my duties at the end of 1974, and a new Senior Social Worker was appointed at the beginning of 1975.

Resuming a description of events in 1972, an After-Care Social Worker was appointed to the Family Group Homes and in addition I worked on two home releases. This work pointed up issues which brought the future of that section to a head, and towards the end of the year I was appointed Assistant Director, with responsibility for Family Group Homes as well as being Senior Social Worker in the Social Work Department.

A description of the system as it operated in those days will help set the scene for developments.   When I took over direction of the group homes, there were 14 group homes caring for a total of 72 children.   (The original total had been reduced - to `improve standards' was the official story, though my own conclusion was that the level of emotional disturbance of the children made higher numbers impractical).   They were cared for by married couples most of whom had one or two children of their own.   The `house mother' was the employed staff member and her husband in essence functioned as an extra child care worker after hours.   Each house had at least 20 hours per week domestic help.   They were backed up by headquarters staff, led by the `Officer-in-Charge', a former nurse.   Under her was the supervisor, an experienced child-care worker who provided most of the direct support to the houses; a school teacher who provided remedial assistance to the many children requiring it; a Holiday Officer (also a nurse, and responsible for organising holiday placements for children while their house parents were on holidays); a youth worker; and two administrative staff.

In 1972 it can be fairly said that we were operating a child care system in an atmosphere not conducive to good child care standards. The Social Welfare Department published a booklet describing both minimal and desirable standards for Children's Homes in 1970 (Social Welfare Department 1970b). No action was taken to enforce these standards.   Standards in most children's homes were poor in many ways.   There was little evidence, a few homes aside, of application of the new knowledge which had been developing in the social sciences in the preceding 20 years.   Little or no leadership was provided to the field from the Social Welfare Department.   On the contrary,

the Department had regulations which were positively inimical to good child care. One relevant example was the policy of requiring children to leave the children's home shortly after they left school and went to work.

In such an atmosphere the orientation and functioning of most homes was quite idiosyncratic. In our own case, heavy emphasis was laid on formalised rules and regulations governing virtually every aspect of the organization's behaviour. Social Welfare Department rules were carefully sought out and followed. Some procedures which were thought to have originated in the department were later found to be unknown to that organisation. Rules, whatever their origin, were brought to the attention of staff through a system of notes called `Regular Reminders' which ensured that at predetermined intervals staff were reminded of their responsibilities in various areas. The number of notes issued each year was in the thousands. It must be emphasized that the intent behind this system seemed benign, and there was a strong commitment to caring for children. However the overemphasis on rigid administrative controls led to a high standard of physical care, but was inimical to the psychological and developmental needs of the children. Children were not always handled with sensitivity nor, in many cases, were their needs even recognized. For example, the heavy emphasis on rules and central decision-making meant that routine decisions about outings, absences from school, and so on that would normally be made within the family setting were subject to central review. The children would become aware that the house parents could not make normal decisions without reference to headquarters, leading in some instances to them challenging authority or becoming irritated (naturally) with the level of surveillance. There was also considerable reluctance to involve professional social work staff with the children. The attempt to treat children as though they were in an ordinary family frequently led to the overlooking of some quite major disturbances.

My initial contacts with the group homes confirmed that a number of children were highly disturbed. The appointment of the After-Care Social Worker prior to my appointment as Assistant Director was followed by the appointment of a Senior Social Worker responsible for professional consultation to house parents and casework with children. The Officer-in-Charge remained responsible for the administration associated with the group homes. Predictably this split responsibility, made for political reasons at the time, did not work. Towards the end of 1973 the Senior Social Worker was given responsibility for all day-to-day operations of the group homes.[16]

Further staff changes were made. A Family Worker was added to the team in mid-1974. One of my initial findings was that very few children had even minimal contact with any relatives. There was no family work to be done as such after we had organised home release of a few children whose parents were quite capable of looking after them, and the family worker was assigned to track down the location of family members and attempt to re-institute

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[16] This was a considerable relief to me because by then I was starting to become heavily involved in the lobbying processes in the field. Although MFCO sanctioned this involvement there had been no relief from the extra workload it entailed.

contacts between them and the children. This attempt, it must be said, was a dismal failure. After months of effort we had located two parents in other states. We paid for one to make a visit to Melbourne but attempts to develop more contact were unsuccessful. The second parent expressed a total lack of interest. In response to enquiries regarding why we had so few parents in contact with children, I have been told that this has been a result of Social Welfare Department attempts to obtain maintenance from parents. They are usually poor and unable to pay maintenance, so they `disappear'. I have no doubt this has been a contributing factor, but I also perceive a lack of effort to engage parents, support them, and help them solve any problems they might have. It is also possible then that lack of parental contact with children is due to our lack of activity in facilitating this.[17]

Over the period until 1975 we have reduced the number of houses from 14 to 10, and decreased the number of children in each house. The immediate reasons for each step in this reduction process varied, but the overall effect was to increase staff input and improve standards.[18]

The intial assessments we carried out indicated that, while some of the houses were operating well, in most cases there were problems both with the organization's management of the houses and in the functioning of many of

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[17] Although the attempted family work was a `failure', with the benefit of hindsight I am struck by how radical it was at the time. The concept of preserving and enhancing child-family relationships was rarely practised. We had no sense of our work being radical at the time; rather it was a logical and professional response to the needs and distress of the children we were caring for. It was also a response to the growing knowledge, particularly accumulated in the foster care and adoption fields, that children who lost contact with their families suffered major identify problems and other emotional disturbances.

[18] I have indicated my concern to decrease the organisation's input into residential care, and I took any legitimate opportunity to obtain Committee of Management approval to reduce numbers of houses and children. The immediate trigger was frequently staff stress, in significant part due to the number of disturbed young people we were dealing with. Fourteen houses was far too many for the staff team, given the number of children with difficulties we had. We increased the staff-child ratio considerably.

In my mind we were raising children but we also, for many of them, were running a home for disturbed children, and these disturbances needed treatment. This idea was not a popular one with the Committee of Management and I learned to be careful how I expressed it. The Committee was so proud of the organization and its work that any suggestion that it contributed to the children's disturbed behaviour was reacted to negatively.

Conceptually, what we did was run group homes based around milieu-therapy principles, backed up by specialised support from our professionals and referral to outside professionals for assessment and sometimes treatment. It must be said that the referrals rarely helped. Diagnoses may have been confirmed, but as far as treatment was concerned we were usually told that we were doing as much as could be done, and to keep it up.

I should have been more reassured by such feedback than I was. For a time I was looking for a level of expert professional help and child counseling skills which I thought should exist because of my Canadian experiences, but in fact did not. It was not until the late 1980s-early 1990s that Victoria started to develop a pool of skilled child counselors, though it must be said that even now the numbers are not great.

the house parents. The latter ranged all the way from the most florid emotional disturbances and personality disorders to over-zealous implementation of an already rigid system, to simple lack of insight into child care principles. All of these had been compounded by lack of training and appropriate consultation.

Emphasis was placed both on organizational changes and on improving the quality of staff performance within organizational constraints, in part by heightening expectations. For a long time this had to be done via responding to behavioural crises with children, which mainly seemed to occur at night.

It took probably two years before we were able to feel that we had stopped operating in crisis mode. Frequently house parents were unable to adjust easily to the new requirements and firm expectations had to be set for some.

This resulted in many resignations. Only four of the house parent couples who were with us in 1972 were still employed in 1975. Most of them left quietly. One or two focused their reasons for leaving on certain of our practices, such as the establishment of the `Teen House', which sent shock waves around the organization and will be discussed shortly.[19]

1973 was a stormy year. This was partly because of children's problems and partly because of administrative constraints. The new houseparents who joined the organisation had not been part of the previous system and frequently were intolerant of the constraints. We had chosen them for their child care skills and understandably they wanted the conditions under which they could exercise those. They had the sympathy of professional staff, but we frequently lacked the capacity to change administrative systems as quickly as we would have liked.

A highly controversial move was our development of a `teen house'. This was a move born of necessity. Most of the children in care who had reached their teens were showing considerable disturbance and many were acting out vigorously against house parent and organizational controls. This situation had reached epidemic proportions at the end of 1972 and a fresh approach to the handling of teenagers was virtually the first major operation we undertook.

As such, this work signalled to the other staff that the newcomers had very different ideas as to how things should be done. It thus became a target for

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[19] I conducted an `assessment' of the institutional system, the individual houses, the children, and the houseparents. I found my family therapy training invaluable because of its assistance in enabling me to observe the dynamics between house parents and children. It soon became clear that most of the houseparents were unsuitable. As indicated earlier, we were still naïve about the extent of physical and sexual abuse in institutions in those days, but even so it crossed my mind that we may well have had problems in that area in a few houses. The direct evidence never came to light, and the issues were dealt with in an appropriate management fashion - by raising the expectations, but also raising the level of training, support, and supervision. The staff turnover was a major short-term problem because of the numbers of new staff we were interviewing, settling in, and supporting. Stress levels in introducing organisational change, I learned, go up before they come down.

criticism - partly because long-standing staff were under threat anyway, and partly because the new methods were a direct criticism of many of the approaches they themselves had used. As well, longer-standing staff were often unable to perceive that because professional staff handled disturbed behaviour in certain ways, this did not imply they always believed all behaviour should be handled likewise.

But houseparents did face a problem which was difficult to solve - disturbed teenagers acting out spread problems through the younger children. It seemed a sensible resolution to everyone's problems to work with them in a group and concentrate specialised supports on them.

Part of our difficulty also stemmed from one crucial decision that had to be made. House parents and management had tended far too often to reject chronically unmanageable children. Frequently the only alternative to our care was a return of the child to one of the reception centres. While this option had not been exercised regularly it had been done too often and sometimes bred an expectation that it was an available solution to problems.

One of my first statements to house parents was that such an option no longer existed. They were our children, they almost always had no other family left, and we would stick with them just as a good family would. Rejecting them because of their behaviour was no longer possible.[20]

This was not a popular position with many existing staff, and clearly contributed to a number leaving. In fact we returned only one child to the reception centre in the next three years, and that was a desperation move because, at age 6 and a chronic `runner', we could not contain him. Much to our surprise he improved in the reception centre, which was hardly set up to treat such problems, and he was able later to return to his siblings in the group home.

Initially we set up a group discussion program for the teenagers (a move which was immediately controversial because it was the first move to break down the isolation of the houses). We then used one of the houses which already had three disturbed teenagers in it to set up the `teen house', where we were then able to set up an environment in which their problems could be dealt with without the problem of their behaviour spreading to the younger children in the group home.

We had a lively group of young people in residence. Of the eight children who actually became residents of the Teen House, I predicted Youth Training Centres as the future for four of them, prostitution for two more, and mental hospitals for the other two. To my everlasting surprise this turned out to be far too pessimistic, thanks to the Teen House, though the process of undoing the

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[20] Returning children to reception centers because of their behaviours was a quite common practice in the field at that time; we were not alone in exercising it.

damage already done to them was very painful and certainly in 1975 not all of the eight can be regarded as model citizens by any means.

Out of a total of 25 teenagers in care in all the houses at that point, we calculated that two-thirds of them were at least moderately disturbed. Staff at all levels lacked the skills required, with a few outstanding exceptions. A further problem we had was a shortage of access to staff who were not downright afraid of angry or disturbed teenagers.[21]

1973, leaving teen problems aside, began with a strong emphasis on review and restructure of staff roles, and organization of a process by which major problems were scheduled for assessment, review, priorities established, and progress reviewed. The whole process was slower than expected because of the resistance, infighting and grapevine gossip which accompanied this process. A purely subjective observation is that these processes are far more intense in residential care situations than in any other kind of welfare setting I have observed. My speech on the need for co-operation between staff received a frequent airing in those days.

The sequence of some of the major developments in 1973 was as follows. The list, which contains only highlights, in itself shows how complex the process of change was:

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[21] By then I, like other professional staff, was wearing down under the demands and needed support from staff specialized in working with disturbed youth. They were not available and I was often called in to `trouble-shoot''. One of the teenagers was normally quiet and unresponsive, but he was prone to occasional psychotic episodes. On one occasion I was called when he was running rampant through the house and staff could not contain him. When I arrived he attacked me. My social work training was not much help but my Judo training was, and I was able to restrain him without hurting him. I had no further trouble until, thinking he had quietened down, I loosened my grip on a few occasions, only to find him kicking like a mule. Immediately I tightened my grip he was fine. Whether this was human contact he needed and was unable to reach out for any other way, or whether the restraint was helping him fight off his internal demons I am not sure. Whatever it was he clung to it tenaciously. I held him for an hour, talking to him quietly, and then for another hour after the doctor arrived until, several shots later and with enough dope in him to drop an elephant, he finally succumbed to sleep. Unfortunately no psychiatrist could treat him. We saw him through the Teen House into rented accommodation we supervised with a youth worker, but his deprivation was such that his functioning never improved. He was unable to hold down steady work and rarely survived an employment interview. He had no friends and we were unable to engage him in social activities or groups in spite of extensive efforts by the youth worker. He was probably our only `failure'; the others did well, and all, with extended support, moved into independent living.

Later it was clear we were pioneering one of the first extended after-care programs. We moved these young people through the house, into rented accommodation (with the youth worker visiting regularly or sleeping over when required) or private board with regular support ,staying in touch with some until their early 20s. There was no sense at the time that this was innovative. As with the attempts at family reunification, it was a reflection of the basic commitment we had made to those young people; and it was the logical response to their needs.

February to March: this mainly involved consideration of setting up the Teen House, plus replacement of three sets of houseparents who left at the end of 1972.

April: the isolation of the group homes ended with approval of the Committee of Management and we instituted group training for house parents. We also obtained Committee of Management approval to establish a clothing allowance for teenagers so that they could budget for and purchase their own clothes, most of which until then they had to obtain from the organization's store. The pocket money allowance, which was low, was increased to match the Social Welfare Department's scale.

May: we commenced lengthy negotiations with the Department about keeping children in care after they went to work and applied for subsidies. These were a long time coming and in the meantime we applied for and obtained Committee of Management agreement that we would keep the children until they were ready to leave, whether subsidised or not.[22]

June: we obtained Committee of Management approval that house parents could consume alcohol in the group homes.

September: we were able to complete consolidation of sibling groups - some siblings had been separated from each other via placement in different group homes, and of course given existing policies had then had no contact with each other until earlier this year.   We also successfully contested a Department decision to have one of five siblings placed in our care adopted.

As house parents' meetings got under way, a series of challenges to traditional means of budgeting, purchasing, methods of administration and so on were set in motion.   Although a heavy increase in the proportion of professional back-up staff took place in l973-74, the majority of staff efforts went into the negotiations surrounding these administrative efforts as new approaches were developed. Some of the administrative issues are still not resolved, but the House Parents themselves took a lead in requesting that the Senior Social Worker's time be spent more on child care matters, because the need to reform administrative processes frequently drew attention away from the direct child care issues.   In 1975 we achieved more of a balance. In the process we have become impressed with the extent to which minor administrative inconveniences can interfere with good child care - and as a result are more sympathetic with the agency's traditional, if sometimes misguided, concern with the subject.[23]

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[22] There is some irony in the fact that, a quarter of a century later, I was involved in a national study of young people leaving care and protection (Maunders et al. 1999) which demonstrated that, nationally, this sensible idea had still not taken root.

[23] Some of the changes look minor but all were the subject of major internal negotiations, submission writing, and usually detailed budget analysis and development.   They frequently involved external negotiation with the Department to determine if approval was required, to obtain external views, and to obtain approval if necessary.   The effort involved in developing changed policies was huge.   House parent meetings overthrew an isolationist policy that had

Looking back over the brief list of major items which were attended to in 1973-74, it is notable that the list reflects the close inter-connectedness of needs in a residential setting. In short, we were attending not only to the needs of the children, but also to those of house and headquarters staff to work under conditions which they found acceptable. As well, we began the process of challenge to the outside conditions which impinged on our ability to deliver good child care services.

With particular regard to the Social Welfare Department, our reactions are rather mixed. At a personal level, and around individual case issues, we have usually received help and co-operation from the senior staff within the Children's Homes Section. At other times we have been able to fight productively with them and maintain long-term relationships. We have sometimes, however, been faced with strong negative reactions which, in essence, have amounted to non-cooperation because we cane from Melbourne Family Care Organization. Staff handling these issues sometimes detected resentment that Melbourne Family Care was changing and no longer a legitimate target for the kind of criticism that it used to receive.

In some ways I found that it was a relief to have these incidents occur - a relief because, after I joined Melbourne Family Care Organization staff, I had frequently been the recipient of criticism from colleagues in the social work field. Occasionally I heard directly (but more often heard it second-hand) that I would "soon fall on my face in that place". It was a relief therefore to find out that I wasn't developing paranoia on the subject.

We encounter this kind of reaction less and less these days – at least partly because we have never let it divert us from our purpose of developing good child care policies and challenging the field in which we operate to allow us to do so. In fact these early challenges coincided with soundings we were taking in the field as a whole to see who really was interested in developing change in the child care field. Fortunately at least a few people were, and the mounting financial and standards crisis in child care provided the issues around which they united in the Survival Campaign. The extent to which Melbourne Family Care Organization was prepared to put its money where its

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existed since the group homes were set up and challenged the very basis of their philosophy. This was stressful for those who were familiar and comfortable with the existing regime. What we had on our side in pursuing such changes is that we had so many disturbed children (and earlier strategies had not worked) that we had time to try different strategies.

The policy change which surprised me the most was that we successfully had the ban on alcohol in group homes overturned. This was such a strong moral issue that I felt it likely we would lose. Nor was it uncontroversial in the sense that it opened up the possibility of other problems or excesses. But we were able to point to the contradictions which resulted when the group father would stop in to the hotel on the way home from work, or the house parents kept alcohol locked in their rooms. These matters would become known to the children so the need to conceal the activity developed an unhealthy atmosphere around it. I would like to have been privy to Committee of Management meetings on these matters. However the Director was successful in arguing for virtually everything we wanted, though I have no doubt that he was worried more than once by the policies we proposed.

mouth was, is signified by the fact that, rather than simply regard such activities as an "extra", the Committee of Management agreed, when restructuring my job at the end of 1974, that such activities were to be part of my job assignment. This decision, in my view, is one of the more significant and progressive decisions which a welfare organization could make in these times.

Nevertheless, we have felt in the child care field a considerable resistance to change and resentment that we were changing. It has seemed, in listening to people react in this way, that it is more comfortable for them to have their welfare scapegoats - we have sensed that this makes it easier for them to ignore the deficiencies in their own organizations.

This point has been commented on at length because it is not simply resistance to change that one sometimes finds - it is antagonism to it. One cannot help but note briefly the lack of support from senior levels in family welfare for policy developments which would improve standards in child care. In general, the lack of leadership from Family Welfare Division in these matters is appalling, considering the training and experience of their staff.

3. Our history – its contemporary relevance

With this cursory examination in mind, the events of the past five years will be considered in the light of the major issues noted as being relevant to events of the 1960s.

3.1 Normal Processes

To a very considerable extent, the problems encountered by this organization over the last few years were quite predictable, given the lack of leadership in the field as a whole, the lack of local precedents for good child care, and the fact that change is necessary. It is suggested that the turmoil we have experienced is likely to happen to any agency approaching change in child care at this point in time. Leadership styles, staff problems, philosophical conflicts, finances, etc. are problems confronting everyone. Granted this point, it now appears that tighter planning and a greater sense of historical continuity could have controlled some of the excesses. In particular one notes with alarming regularity in the welfare field, failure to build on previous experience. Knowledge has tended, therefore, to be fragmentary and non-cumulative. Indeed, it has taken the current analysis for our submission to the Enquiry for Melbourne Family Care staff to become aware of how much we have made this mistake in the past few years.[24]

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[24] This was a message I wanted to deliver to the field, as well as back to the organisation, because we lacked good planning and it was going to be necessary in the future. Privately I was less critical of what we had done. We were not really prepared, until we got detailed hands-on experience of the situation, for how many children were seriously disturbed and

To an extent, proper internal planning and communication guards against this problem. Additionally, one must be wary of outside pressures. Amongst these are the welfare fads and fashions, the swings of the pendulum. Analysis of the 1960s and 1970s, both inside Melbourne Family Care Organization and outside, shows peaks and troughs in the popularity of family counselling, family group homes, congregate care, foster care, community-based services, and so on. To an extent we have followed these swings, irrespective of the training and experience of the staff who were running the services. This is not totally avoidable, nor is it totally bad. It does argue for greater awareness and then more careful planning in the light of this awareness.

We are now moving into a stage of stability and consolidation after a period of considerable change, although we feel that further change and development is required. In the Family Group Homes we note that this steady stage is one in which problems, because of the nature of the children cared for, will continually arise, and therefore the job will continue to be a relatively stressful one for staff. Nevertheless, the changes have already produced conditions which are appreciated by staff and children, and problems arise far less frequently than they used to.

If history is any guide, this could be a cause for concern. As noted earlier, a quiescent phase in an organization's development can have many implications of which the euphoria and general feeling of progress is only one. We thus feel the need to analyse the current state of progress so that, through over-confidence, we do not let the situation drift and find ourselves, in a few years time, faced again with enormous problems.

3.2   Policy Development

In many ways a great deal of work has gone into this. We have broadened our potential range of approaches so that we can encompass a number of

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how many house parents would have to leave. We were not fully prepared, and perhaps could not have been, for how much minor administrative problems could interfere with good child care, and how much we would have to reorder our priorities in order to solve those problems. Furthermore there were few local precedents for what good residential care was like, taking into account our mix of disturbed children with children who could not be labelled thus but carried more than their share of distress. Nor were there precedents for how to change an organisation to be properly responsive to these needs. So, although we had made mistakes, privately I thought we had done a good job, even while operating in crisis mode for as long as we did. But I felt it best to deliver the message with some humility and not look as if we were holding the high moral ground.

The experiences I had with the group homes also fundamentally changed my negative reactions to residential care. I found that, even under the massive constraints we worked within, it was possible to run a residential care system which was a positive experience for the children and which did compensate to a considerable degree for past experiences and prepare them for a positive adulthood. I never became an advocate for residential care to be the major part of child welfare it had always been, but this experience did lead me to resist calls for the total eradication of residential care.

different ways of tackling family and children's problems, and so that we can make some attack on the societal conditions within which these occur. In other ways we have at least begun the process of establishing the philosophical grounds on which present and future developments should occur. There is, however, a big gap between these factors. Our major efforts so far, and the policy revisions accompanying them, are really associated with improving and tidying up what already existed.

Criticisms that were made earlier of policy developments in the 1960s are still quite relevant. Hopefully we are in good shape to overcome this problem. We would, of course, do better if we did not tackle these issues alone - which is part of the reason for drawing them to the attention of the Enquiry. The connectedness of an individual agency to general development is always a source of difficulty. By and large there is little external incentive or coercion to relate to broad developments in the field, and in fact there is an absence of a broad child welfare plan to which agencies can relate meaningfully. One thus tends to be connected to other agencies through sporadic public relations efforts, or committees which produce little but words, or via the love/hate relationship that necessity and circumstances breed with such bodies as the Social Welfare Department.

These questions must be settled. A decision must be made on them one way or another if policy development in voluntary agencies is to make any sense at all.

3.3 Finances

Earlier it was indicated that, in spite of the agency's core of assured income, major service cutbacks were necessary in the late 1960s. A marginal increase in staff was possible in the early 1970s. Then came the sale of our South Melbourne "Emerald Hill" property. This was the culmination of years of endeavour by the organization to ensure the most favourable terms for investing the proceeds when it did finally sell. This seemed in early 1972 to set the stage for massive development. The income from the 3¼ million dollar proceeds should have enabled us to literally change the face of the organization, one would have thought. In fact I spent considerable time working up plans for programs in the family support area which we anticipated being able to develop from the sale of Emerald Hill.

Instead, inflation and the Child Care Workers' Wages Board took their toll. In early 1975 it was estimated that by mid-1975 we would break even again, with a net increase of only about five staff in spite of the Emerald Hill sale.[25]

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[25] The sale of Emerald Hill was highly controversial and probably disruptive to the change process. The organization decided in 1972 to sell the property, which was subject to rent controls and therefore returned a very low profit, given its market value. The controversial aspect was that the area included a mix of old businesses and many low-income tenants, and this became a matter of political controversy since legislation was required to invest the proceeds of the sale. The proposal to sell the area to private property developers, which would maximize returns but doubtless lead to the demolition of properties and the

This highlights in the most extra-ordinary way the financial dilemma which is facing Children's Homes in Victoria. The issue is not for us a "Survival" one as much as it is for others. But on the other hand, some critical decisions about future development cannot be made until the State Government's response to the Survival Committee's request for 100% of staff salaries and 50% of other costs is known.

We must also point out that such a funding scheme is only a short-term one. It simply is not just that a few homes like ourselves can afford to develop adequate standards while other homes must struggle and their children miss out. The standard of care the child receives should not be dependent on the chance factor associated with whichever home he or she goes to. We trust that the Enquiry will make recommendations regarding the funding of Children's Homes which will ensure that they can afford to maintain adequate standards.

In the long run, of course, some of the significance of the actual amount of funds available to us may lose its importance. One of the major implications of this paper is that the significance of the voluntary agency's contribution is, or should be, less related to the size of its programs than to other factors.

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displacement of low-income earners, heightened the controversy. Eventually legislation was passed in March 1973 and the area was put up for auction later that year.

This development is relevant to the story of organizational change. It occurred, as our chronology shows, during the height of staff involvement in redeveloping the family group home system and as the Committee of Management wrestled with the many controversial proposals we put forward. As a staff, though, we were also embarrassed and angry at the prospect that the organization we worked for, a welfare organization, might initiate activities which would result in the displacement of low-income families. This came to a head prior to the auction when the organization was considering proposals to sell privately. Staff organized a meeting at the same time the Committee of Management was meeting to consider offers. We decided unanimously that if the organization accepted such offers we would have to protest publicly. I unreservedly supported this, while thinking privately that this could permanently derail the process of change we were involved in and probably result in many of us having to leave. Still, that was an uncertain outcome; what was definite was that here was a principle we had to stand up for. I telephoned the Director's Secretary, asked for him to be called out of the Committee of Management meeting, and conveyed the staff's sentiments to him and requested they be conveyed to the Committee.

I do not know what impact this intervention had, but the Committee did not accept any offers at that point. Fortunately the auction was cancelled after the Federal Government intervened and offered to mediate a deal between the key stakeholders. The land was eventually bought by the Victorian Housing Commission. The price - $3.25 million – seemed a fair one, though it is doubtless possible that more could have been obtained from private sale. In any case the outcome was honourable for all sides and all interests, and at a formal level internal relationships continued as before. I believe that relationships with the Committee must have been damaged by these events; it is virtually impossible to think otherwise, especially given the authoritarian background of the organization. To have its authority challenged in this way must have been intolerably galling to the Committee.

3.4 Staffing & Staff Training

Few of the issues mentioned in the current paper will give senior staff as much cause to gnash their teeth as this one. Three aspects of this issue deserve special mention - quality/quantity, training, and staff stress.

Staff supply is still a most problematical issue. Over the last two to three years our best recruiting has probably been in obtaining quality House Parents, despite the increased numbers of family group homes in the field and thus the increased opportunities for House Parents. We can hardly feel confident that this state of affairs will continue.

With the rapid expansion of the number of Social Workers about to graduate in the next few years and a likely slow-down of the growth of opportunities for them at State and Commonwealth level, it is possible that the supply issue will not be quite as acute in the future as it has been in the past.

What has yet to be demonstrated is whether Schools of Social Work can turn out a better product than they have previously. Too frequently one meets young social workers who are unable, unwilling or untrained to meet the demands of quality and quantity and the challenge to develop and innovate, which this field requires of them. The same can be said of other professionals.

The training issue must be examined in terms of what help is available to staff to increase their skills. There are some things that we can offer to staff as an organization - e.g. individual consultation is highly developed and group training is given to House Parents, Relieving House Parents, and the staff of our Community Services Unit. Team planning in our Family Group Home Department also partly serves a staff training function.

By and large though, senior and specialist staff, as well as other staff on occasions, would benefit from training opportunities offered outside the Organization. Our Remedial Teacher last year completed a Diploma in Remedial Education which has proved to be of enormous value in her work. For the most part, such opportunities, or even much shorter "crash" courses, are unavailable to Social Workers or Welfare Officers.

Monash University is about to offer a course in Residential Social Work, and one would hope their interest in this area would be a continuing one. Much more is needed, and unless it is provided in many areas, the quality of welfare work will not improve as it should. There are limits to what the individual agency can do by itself.

The stress of welfare work on staff is also a continuing problem. All too frequently this stress, combined with personal issues and problems, will incapacitate staff to some extent for a short or even long period. We have not solved this problem in spite of our ability to limit the caseloads of our community and other professional staff. Despite the massive increase in professional support, we are not confident we have solved the contribution of

the stress factor to the rate of turnover of child care staff. Observation tells us that we are not alone. We are of the view that this factor in the welfare field deserves major study. We would predict that stress levels, already high in many agencies, will increase further as the pressure for better standards increases and as agencies increasingly try to deal with the disturbances of children in care rather than send those children back to reception centres.

3.5   Internal Integration and Co-ordination

Much effort in the past few years has gone into improving and streamlining administration and communication. However this must not be allowed to obscure the fact that we are still an agency offering two specialised and functionally distinct and separate services, with a few minor frills tacked on. Much thought needs to be given in the near future to whether this is the best state of affairs or not. However, if we are to become a genuinely multi-function agency - and this has yet to be determined - further major restructuring of our services will be necessary. Without labouring the point in detail, perhaps it is sufficient to justify its inclusion by pointing out that many so-called "multi-function" agencies in the voluntary sector in fact look like mini-versions of the Social Welfare Department, especially as it was structured in the 1960s and early 1970s. Proper response to client needs argues for much more flexible structures and procedures. One wonders whether the insights and skills are available. There are, in this area, critical issues of planning, staffing and training for the Enquiry to consider in developing a truly modern family and child welfare system in Victoria.

3.6   Administrative Styles

We are attempting to combine strong leadership from senior staff with appropriately delegated authority, highlighted by heavy emphasis on communication and team consultation and negotiation in each of our areas of endeavour. The extent to which these are emphasized varies according to the degree to which tasks are administrative or professional. The process of achieving this goal is still under way, and although well advanced in each department, is still being developed between departments and various levels of the Organization. More recently this is occurring between staff and members of the Committee of Management, with genuine enthusiasm and indications of belief in the possibility of good results from both sides.

4.   Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight issues from our recent history and to detail attempts to respond to these issues, in the belief that this process does throw up issues of general relevance - and thus of relevance to the Enquiry. We ourselves obviously have a massive job to do in charting a course in relation to these issues. To a considerable extent, what we decide and what

we do can only be determined by knowledge of what the Enquiry recommends and which of its recommendations are implemented. Naturally many decisions cannot wait for that process to unfold. We therefore urge the Enquiry to produce an interim report at the earliest possible moment, as we are one of many agencies whose current planning is affected by uncertainty about these larger developments. And we reiterate – our experience shows that change is possible but that it is stressful, difficult, and intellectually challenging. The process of reform in the field will make major demands on the field as a whole and on individual agencies. These must be faced realistically and planned for thoroughly.

Paper Four

Lobbying and Reform in Child Welfare in the 1970s

In this chapter I will outline changes in the residential child care field that occurred in the early-to-late 1970s.   These changes have received little attention in the literature, especially from the perspective of participants. Detailing this history will require revisiting some developments in the early 1970s in order to provide context.

In order to present this account - and in particular the `Survival Campaign' - coherently I will first outline the broad context which led to change.   I will then describe the lobbying that took place.

4.1 The Development of a Financial Crisis in Residential Child Care

Earlier chapters have outlined conditions in the residential child care field during this period, and various concerns.   I commenced networking and gradually located people who shared these concerns.   A voluntary working group was established under the auspices of the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (CWAV) to consider the issues.   Events external to the field, though, soon heightened problems to crisis point, while providing a window of opportunity for change as crises frequently do.

Australia, prior to the 1970s, was a low unemployment and relatively low inflation country.   A variety of factors combined to change this, and growing inflation became a problem for many enterprises in Australia, including residential child care in Victoria.   This was exacerbated by changes in the funding of residential care in the early 1970s plus the establishment of a wages board for residential child care workers.

The change in funding was described in the Social Welfare Department's Annual Report for the year ended June 1972   (Social Welfare Department 1972: 19-20).

> A new system of payments to approved children's homes came into effect on 1st July 1971. The homes are now divided into two categories:-
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> (1) those which are essentially children's homes caring substantially for wards, but often also for some privately-placed non-ward children;

(2) those which are babies' homes or in the nature of hospitals, and those having mixed functions of various kinds.

For category (1) homes, the previous system of boarding-out rates paid by the Social Welfare Department and maintenance grants paid by the Hospitals and Charities Commission has been abolished. Under the new system, the Social Welfare Department alone makes per capita payments for all wards and non-wards.   The rate for wards is the home's own running cost per child per week (as assessed by the Department on the previous financial year's expenditure) less $1.50 per week up to a maximum rate of $20.00 per week.   Non-wards are paid for at half this rate.

Category (2) homes receive a flat rate of $20.00 per week for each ward in lieu of the previous boarding out rates, but no payment for non-wards.

It is hoped that the higher level of payment will open up opportunities for the improvement of standards of care as recommended in "Standards for Children's Homes" published by the Department in 1970.

Subsequently payments to wards increased to a maximum of $23 per week for wards from 24.8.72, and $11.50 per week for non wards.   Foster care payments increased from $7.50 per week to $10 (Social Welfare Department 1973).

The previous system had been a relatively popular one with children's homes. Hospital and Charities Commission funding (essentially for capital and maintenance works) was fairly flexible and operated on a deficit funding model;   if there were overruns on budget these were frequently recompensed.   The new system did not have the same attractions and a number of important items of expenditure were deducted by the Department as it calculated the previous year's running costs.   The notion of a subsidy based on the individual home's expenditure also, of course, rewarded the spendthrift as well as the agency concerned with improving standards, but did nothing for those agencies whose standards were questionable or whose resources were limited.

The Residential Child Care Workers Award, announced in 1973, substantially increased the wages bill of every residential care agency.   This was a shock to the field, particularly those agencies used to paying small salaries.   My own agency paid the house mother over $100 per week, and the parents and children received free board and lodgings.   Some agencies paid as little as $10-$15 per week plus board and lodgings.   The Wages Board's determination sent those agencies into financial crisis although its provisions affected everyone.   During the period in question my agency was looking to sell the area surrounding the South Melbourne Town Hall (previously the site of the orphanage before its move to Brighton).   We had planned a major increase in programs (particularly prevention programs) as a result of the sale.   I had invested significant time in planning the proposals I wanted the Committee of Management to consider.   I wasted most of this - as indicated in the previous chapter the net result was that from a sale worth $3.25 mil. we obtained a gain of only five staff.

Circumstances rapidly led to a number of agencies claiming that they were on the edge of bankruptcy or would become so in the near future.

The crisis also presented the possibility for positive change. Those of us who were meeting discussed developments. We concluded we needed to push for a new funding system but that we could use the opportunity to press for improved standards. It soon became clear that the way to do this was to press for an enquiry so that consciousness could be heightened.

The following details are mainly derived from a log I kept at the time. I have highlighted key dates in order to convey the chronology clearly.

The first formal action from the field occurred on **7.12.1973** when the President of the CWAV, Dr. Dora Bialestock, wrote to the then Minister for Social Welfare, Hon. Vasey Houghton, drawing attention to the financial problems in the field. She recommended separate subsidies for each activity of each agency, based on forecast costs, and adjusted subsequently from information shown in audited accounts.

The Minister replied on **27.12.1973** indicating that he would not implement these recommendations as they were too expensive and more complex to administer. He suggested that per capita grants were flexible, had increased substantially, and had promoted improvement in standards. The funding of foster care was under consideration.

The Social Welfare Department's Annual Report 1972-73 noted that there had been an increase in funding to approved children's homes from $18,542,475 in 1971/72 to $23,082,880 in 1972/73 (Social Welfare Department 1973). Much of this had been absorbed by increased wages and inflation. The report also recorded the extent of overcrowding at Allambie, the children's reception centre, which had a capacity of 228. It had an average occupancy rate of 270 per day during the year, and on several occasions accommodated over 300. Further, the report noted the low foster care provision in contrast with an increased interest in foster care in the field. These were some of the other symptoms of the growing crisis. The Annual Report when published in late 1973 also said

> The increasing financial plight of voluntary social welfare organizations is becoming very apparent…Unless increased amounts are made available…a number of these organizations will be forced to close their doors permanently. Should this happen, the Department will be required to take over many of their functions, doubtless at increased cost….
>
> Social Welfare Department 1973: 10

This is not the kind of commentary one would now see in a departmental annual report.

A few members of the field, myself included, had been meeting through this period to consider action in the field. Our concern was with standards rather

than finances as such, but the financial crisis seemed to offer a window of opportunity to get the standards in the field onto the agenda. I ran a weekend-long conference in February 1974 which focused on the need for better standards and the need for family support and prevention, as well as improvement of financial subsidies. The conference examined ways of lobbying to achieve these goals.

The results of this consciousness-raising were soon shown at a rather volatile CWAV annual meeting at which a number of people criticised both government policy and the lack of action from the CWAV. A seminar was held by CWAV to discuss these issues on 12.7.1974. The lack of action had been contributed to by a variety of factors. There were a number of coordinating bodies in the field during the 1970s, which doubtless dissipated energy and coordinated action. There was the CWAV, which represented agencies as a whole though for most of its history it had been, it is not unfair to say, dominated by the socially prominent Angliss Family. Dame Jacobena Angliss had been responsible for the presidency through much of CWAV's history and her daughter May had followed her in playing a prominent role. CWAV, as a result, had a history of polite delegations to the Liberal Party but no history of challenging the party, with which in fact it had been in substantial sympathy.

Other coordinating bodies included the Victorian Association of Child Care Executives (VACCE) which consisted of managers in the field, and the Association of Residential Child Care Organisations (ARCCO), which largely contained Board members and some child care workers. There was also the Victorian Council of Social Services (VCOSS). VCOSS was the strongest of all the groups but was not an active player in the child welfare field, because there was an informal agreement between VCOSS and CWAV that CWAV would represent child welfare issues.

There was considerable debate about which of these bodies should spearhead the coming action. Sympathy was largely with VACCE, given its more active role, but CWAV had just appointed a small executive largely with funds raised from charitable trusts, so with misgivings it seemed that CWAV was the body to support.

A `Survival Committee' was established to take action on the financial crisis. CWAV was to provide administrative support, but the Survival Committee was to report back to and seek direction from agency meetings. In practice, Geoff Woodfield, Barry Cook (both from Orana Peace Memorial Homes for Children) and I carried the action from that point.

I will omit the minutiae of the campaign and focus on key developments.

The first tangible follow-up to the CWAV seminar was a letter on **17.7.1974** from the Survival Committee to all residential care agencies, whether members of the CWAV or not, enclosing a questionnaire on their financial situation and advising of a further meeting to be held on 1.8.1974.

At the meeting on **1.8.1974** we reported back on preliminary results from the survey, which were incomplete but alarming.   They also showed a further major problem, which several years later I initiated a project to address.   It was that the financial data could not be collated, at least without considerable creativity.   Accounting and financial reporting systems varied widely from agency to agency.   Not only from agency to agency - one agency told me it kept six entirely different sets of accounts for different stakeholders. Government expectations of financial reporting were limited.   These factors did not help our cause.   Still, we had enough information to show the crisis was real.

A number of resolutions were endorsed.   We were to seek a meeting with the Premier; plan a PR campaign to increase the attention and priority given to welfare; seek an enquiry into child welfare; prepare terms of reference for an enquiry into child welfare; and seek support from other organisations.   The crisis should be exploited by drawing attention to the need for improved standards and for the need for an improved family support system.   This trio of aims - better subsidies, better standards, and improved family support - were intertwined for the rest of the campaign.

Suggested means for threatened agencies to use included refusing to erode their reserves; cessation of the admission of further children; and as a last resort return of children to the Department (as far as I am aware this option was never utilised).   It was also clear that the field needed educating on the issues.   To this end several papers were presented.

One of my concerns - it was a long-standing concern that the financial crisis brought to a head - was that there was very little conception in the field of what being `voluntary' did or could mean.   At the meeting on 1.8.1974 I presented a paper on the issue.   It was published later in the year (Liddell 1974b) by CWAV as part of a compendium of papers on various topics. In the paper I analysed the roles that voluntary agencies could play and concluded:

- there were two roles which clearly distinguished what the voluntary sector could do from what government could do; the voluntary sector could provide services outside the role of government, and it could also act as an informed critic of government and advocate for change

- these roles were vital to preserve if the voluntary sector was to retain its independent role and identity.   Preserving them had further consequences; funding arrangements with government needed to cover costs so that the voluntary agency's independent resources could be devoted to these distinctive roles.   As it was funding arrangements were eroding this capacity.

On **15.8.1974**, given that the results of the first survey were somewhat unsatisfactory, a further questionnaire was circulated.   In the meantime we obtained a reply from the Premier, Hon. Richard Hamer, to our initial representations.   There was no immediate response to the request for an

enquiry but the subsidies were increased.   Given our lack of experience this early success was good for morale.

The second survey indicated that the increases were a mixed blessing. There were constraints on eligibility and estimates showed that the impact would soon be dissipated, due to increased inflation and further increases in salaries paid under the Child Care Workers' Wages Board.   We were successful though in obtaining a meeting with the Premier on 19.9.1974.

In the meantime the level of activity increased.   The Department was bombarded with requests from agencies for deficits to be met.   A format for submissions and for handling deputations was prepared to assist them.   The agencies were issued with reports and guides for lobbying parliamentarians. Press releases were issued, advertisements placed in newspapers highlighting the crisis, and demands to see the Premier intensified.   Copies of correspondence provided to us by the agencies show that they played their part energetically.   Politicians were bombarded with information and requests and many of these were relayed to the Premier and the Minister, who were made aware of the concern that was developing.   The size of the problem was obvious.   In mid-1974, fourteen homes caring for nearly 1000 children had insufficient funds to meet deficits anticipated for 1974/75 and would have to close.   Five homes caring for over 300 children could guarantee their survival for only two years.   A further eleven homes caring for nearly 800 children could last somewhat longer.

The numbers in care were already in decline.   It was not obvious at that point how permanent a trend that would be, though many of us certainly wanted such a decline.   The Department's own figures (derived from the Department of Community Welfare Services Annual Report 1980/81) show the subsequent following decline in numbers of wards and rates per 1000 of population under age eighteen:

Table 4.1:   Numbers of State Wards and rates per 1000 population between 1976/77 and 1980/81

Year	1976/77	1977/78	1978/79	1979/80	1980/81
Ward Nos.	5978	5620	5256	4611	4158
Rates per 1000 population	4.9	4.6	4.3	3.8	3.5

Source: Department of Community Welfare Services Victoria 1981

This contrasts with the rate of seven per 1000 of children under eighteen reported in Tierney's (1963) research.   Not all this decline can be accounted for by the diminishing numbers of voluntary placements.   The commencement of the decline, though, clearly predated any substantial development of family support, of adequate pensions for single mothers (a development during the 1970s), or the development of regionalised services, though these factors made a contribution.   One can surmise, in the absence

of clear evidence, that a change of attitude towards the use of wardship as a dispositional order was in place before the impact of other factors was felt.

Given the field was in decline and I was critical of its standards, I briefly struggled with the question of whether I should fight or let it collapse. My conclusion that I should fight came out of my convictions about the roles of voluntary agencies. As well, the voluntary sector's resources needed protecting because, given the conservative era we were in, it was that sector's resources that were likely to underpin much of the needed development of foster care and family support.

The Children's Protection Society was a CWAV member[26], but it was facing a financial crisis of its own, which the Survival Campaign was only partly able to address. This was because the amount of residential care CPS provided was limited in size and focused on reception care. We appealed to the government for immediate financial assistance for CPS on an interim basis while the Child Maltreatment Workshop's deliberations proceeded. This was unsuccessful.

We met with the Premier on **19.9.1974**, tabled the terms of reference for an enquiry which I had drafted, and sought the Premier's response to a variety of matters. The conclusions of the meeting were

- the Premier gave an assurance that the subsidies would be reviewed immediately in the light of the recent Wages Board determination

- he would establish an `investigation committee' to examine the present funding system in the light of the information we presented. He indicated that consideration might be given to an alternative system based on a `basic cost of care subsidy' with additional payments for specific or specialised services

- he affirmed the government's responsibility for state wards and the need for the services provided by voluntary agencies

- he acknowledged the need for establishment grants for voluntary agencies setting up foster care programs

- he indicated that the CPS case for financial support was being investigated separately

- he promised to discuss the need for an inquiry with the Minister for Social Welfare and indicated he could be reasonably confident of the Minister's support.

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[26] CPs at that point was the only welfare agency authorized to intervene into child protection issues. Its small staff worked only in a limited part of Melbourne. It was 1979 before the commencement of the development of a state-wide welfare-based intervention service.

On **23.9.1974** the results of the deputation were reported back to an agency meeting. Further sources of support for the campaign were identified and would be pursued, but the basic conclusion of the meeting was that the Survival Committee should continue a watching brief and call an agency meeting if necessary. It appeared as if our efforts were close to success.

Confidence waned as delays continued, and then alarm was felt when the Premier announced an enquiry into the needs of `retarded' children. Such an enquiry was needed and supported by us, but we felt its establishment might lead the government to relax regarding what it felt it needed to do for other disadvantaged children. We pressed for another meeting with the Premier, which was granted on 26.11.1974. In the meantime the campaign was stepped up again and we also held a public meeting, attended by the Press and some 200 people in total, to publicize the need for an enquiry. At the meeting I presented a speech supporting the need for an enquiry. The speech was a summary of the issues and problems, largely centred around two case examples coming from my experience at MFCO. I highlighted the lack of family support, the lack of standards, and the system-wide problems and systems abuses (although that term was not used) as a practical way of illustrating the need for an enquiry and for change.

On **26.11.1974** we met with the Premier. The meeting was relatively short. The Premier indicated that he already had an internal enquiry into funding set up and invited Barry Cook to join it. He also said `You can have your enquiry'.

The Premier was clearly irritated by the publicity though he acted with restraint. The only relevant comment he made was to Geoff Woodfield and me after our fellow deputees Sr. Agatha Rogers and Vernon Knight had left. As we were about to leave also the Premier stopped us and said quietly `You didn't have to do all this.' Neither Geoff nor I responded; there seemed nothing to say, and personally I felt no reason to doubt the Premier's sincerity. It was an example of how perspectives can differ. The Premier was not traveling in our shoes; he did not experience the pressures we did; and he did not experience them with our sense of urgency or of what was timely to relieve the crisis. We had done what we felt we needed to, and the bottom line was that we had been successful.

The Survival Committee played its part in nominating members to the review committee, the membership of which was announced by the Premier on **5.12.1974**. After that, there was a combination of relief at having achieved our goals and exhaustion. We had, in addition to our full-time jobs with our agencies, campaigned non-stop for months. We were happy to leave the follow-up to the enquiry. A small and rather tired celebration during December seemed necessary but almost too much effort to organise.

We learned a lesson rapidly, because spiraling costs showed as early as the following February that the leisurely pace of the enquiry and the associated investigation of a new subsidy system would not solve things. We reconvened and made urgent submissions to the government. Another

increase in the per capita subsidy was granted virtually immediately. This helped, but a further survey we carried out showed that even so the situation was worse than when the campaign had begun best part of a year earlier. We immediately increased communication to interested parties and the media.

On **14.4.1975** a meeting of agency representatives was convened. Though the necessary campaign actions were endorsed, the meeting was poorly attended and there was an atmosphere of gloom and depression.

On **29.4.1975**, at a meeting of the Survival Committee, the poor support at the last agency meeting was discussed and the implications of agency attitudes assessed. It was not that we were not supported as such, but a feeling of hopelessness had dissipated energy. We were concerned that the agency response might imply to the government that we had little effective support. We concluded it was advisable to focus the coming action on the homes in the most serious financial state, since these were most likely to be of active support.

We called thirteen such agencies to a meeting on **6.5.1975**. Our judgment was confirmed; these agencies, depressed as they were, were also prepared to be energised and to support further action. Several days later we held a press conference in a family group home which had been forced to close. A few `abandoned' toys, including a considerably pre-loved teddy bear, were left lying around. The press conference was informed of the government's failure to take effective action on the funding crisis, and the press given access to the thirteen agencies. They presented their individual stories.

The Premier's response was almost immediate. In a letter on **25.6.1975** he advised increases in per capita rates and backdated grants to cover award increases since **1.10.1974**. He indicated that a new funding system would be announced in the next state budget, and that a joint Treasury-SWD-CWAV committee would be set up to develop the specifications of the funding system.

In Paper V I reproduce a submission prepared by Geoff Woodfield and me on the funding system we had been working on. The difficulties of providing hard evidence to support the quality levels we wanted enshrined in the funding system were evident at the time, and show in the submission. That aside, the contents of the submission are of interest; partly because of what they show of our thinking at the time and partly for what they reflect of the state of the field and its staffing at the time. I am not aware of any other analysis of the staffing in the various models of residential care at that time, so the data can be said to be unique.

Broadly the research showed the paucity of professionals in residential care. Congregate care facilities were the worst off; most of their professional staff were employed in schools on-campus, and they had very few welfare staff. Congregate care facilities also had very poor child care staff:child ratios. Family group homes were better off in all categories of staff, and we used that

information to model recommendations for improved staffing. The analysis also showed that not only were the larger organisations poorly off in terms of staffing, the smaller ones were struggling for viability too. This led us to recommend that the larger organisations be closed down and that the smaller ones were probably unable to sustain the infrastructure required to deal with problematic children and families either.

4.2 The campaign results and aftermath

The details of the funding system were documented later in the 1976 SWD Annual Report. What was announced was a 90% subsidy of existing staff salaries and a per capita payment which varied between $13 and $17 per child per week, with half that amount paid for non-wards. Those homes looking after fewer children received the higher amount (Social Welfare Department Victoria 1976). Our recommendations aimed at standardising staffing levels and providing quality care were not responded to, but a small budget was set up so that agencies wanting to lift staffing levels might apply for extra funding.

We had wanted more. We wanted staffing standards and had outlined what we thought was appropriate. Many homes were, we felt, grossly understaffed and our submission outlines telling statistics on that matter. We also wanted a system that provided a better hedge against inflation. It was predictable that homes would find it increasingly difficult to raise their contribution. However it was clear that we would not get more, at least without a protracted battle whose outcome was highly doubtful. We seemed to have gone to the well as often as we could. We were tired. So we disbanded after warning the government of the consequences of what they had done, but feeling that we had done well.

The campaign had major ripple effects. Subsequent campaigns, involving different combinations of people, pressed successfully for new subsidy systems in youth hostels, then in foster care, and later still in adoption and child protection. These campaigns were able to build on the precedents we had set. The principles involved in 90% salary subsidies and 50% of other costs, flawed as they were, were important benchmarks for the many programs with worse funding levels, including a few years later the new child protection system.

We had demonstrated the field could challenge the political process and be successful. New campaigns built on that hope and that confidence. Each of them represented a story in itself and in each case the gains had to be fought for. However the ground had been broken in significant ways. The actual tactics were not radical by modern standards. They were successful because, in the context of the times, they were radical. They emerged from a field whose lengthy history of contacts with the political process emphasised politeness, and political and social connections. We abandoned that in favour of engaging in political tactics ourselves; those tactics, coming from such a `nice' field, were completely outside the experience of the government of the day.

Another major ripple effect was in the family welfare field.   We had established a basis for this by successfully pressing for the enquiry.   I felt though that the campaign would have a particular impact on family welfare. Given the competitiveness within the field, family welfare supporters would be irked by the success of the somewhat despised children's homes field, notwithstanding the fact we had campaigned for a much higher priority for family support.   Some family welfare supporters and practitioners were indeed provoked into a rethink of what they were doing, and many turned with new vigor to the development of family support programs with the idea of reasserting, quite rightly, the priority of those programs.

If I had been involved in that movement I would have been pressing for different family support program outcomes - I indicated earlier some concern with the directions which emerged.   However I had unfinished business because of my concerns about child protection issues and the fact that the Survival Campaign was of little value to the Children's Protection Society.   I later returned to support the child protection lobbies.

The Committee of Enquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria (1976) reported in 1976.   Its terms of reference were to enquire into the facilities required for care of wards apart from their families; develop recommendations for approving or registering organisations in the residential and foster care field and for ensuring standards; examine alternatives to wardship when protective intervention was required; examine the needed facilities for staffing and training; and examine priorities, costs and financing.   Interestingly, the report concentrated on children under fifteen, though the terms of reference did not require this.   As a consequence it effectively ignored many of the young women whose circumstances were identified in the Leaper (1974) research as of concern.

The Report was damning in some of its conclusions.

> Not only is there a disconcerting degree of malfunctioning in the existing child welfare system, but the system itself is in many ways inappropriate for contemporary society....Victoria lacks both a statewide family welfare policy and a coherent system of family supportive services.
> Committee of Enquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria: 11

Further, it suggested that the legislation was basically 19th century in orientation and provided little guidance for intervention.   Amendments to the legislation were suggested, including wardship to be available only when it was the least damaging option available, after other alternatives had been considered.   Admission to wardship for twelve months only in the first instance was recommended.   Some of these changes, which were sensible, found their way into the *Community Welfare Services Act 1978*.   They were also piecemeal changes.   The report recognised this and recommended a thorough review of the legislation.   It was some years before the Child Welfare Practice and Legislative Review Committee carried this out.

The report also recommended the development of family support as well as varieties of out-of-home care, a variety of dispositional orders, and contracts with non-government agencies.

Donna Jaggs, who was research officer for the enquiry, wrote some years later in an optimistic vein about the modern intellectual frameworks the Committee of Enquiry brought to its work (Jaggs 1991). I can accept that the Committee believed this, but my reaction at the time was that the report was disappointing and subsequent reading confirms that it lacked depth. While it said many of the right things it was very general, lacked data, and made many assertions without supporting arguments. It had no guiding philosophy (one member's philosophical position was included as an appendix to the main report). It read at the time, and in retrospect still looks, as a report which pointed in the right general direction but with very little detailed content. Matters such as standards, costs and financing received little or no attention in spite of terms of reference that required this. The directions developed for the future of the field were very general. One could accuse the report of replicating a criticism it made of the current legislation – it provided little guidance for intervention.

The value of the review can thus be questioned. Most of the recommendations from the field pointed to the same general directions that the Review itself took so much time to draw conclusions on. Most of the difficult questions, such as some of those posed in my submission, were ignored; central issues in the terms of reference were not examined. The Department itself was uncertain what to do with the report and established a Central Implementation Committee (Social Welfare Department 1977) to study the report and consider how to implement it. This committee worked for well over a year before developing even the most general directions. Its intended report was never published and in many ways its work was overtaken by developments that occurred separately such as in family support and localisation. The fact though that an internal bureaucratic process took over, without external input and without clear guidance on controversial issues from the enquiry, meant that key issues like standards and the roles of voluntary agencies as contrasted with government were ignored. I continued pressing these separately.

4.3 Client views of residential care

Although it is not directly connected to the issues canvassed above, a small study I conducted late in the 1970s on client views of residential care may be of interest.

By 1978 I was the Executive Director of the Children's Welfare Association of Victoria (CWAV), Victoria's peak child welfare body. I made a submission to the Victorian Consultative Council for Social Development (VCCSD) from CWAV in 1978 on the basis of a small research project funded by a charitable trust (Liddell & Paperin 1978). The VCCSD was interested in feedback from consumers, and we had particular access to those in residential care. The

VCCSD asked us to concentrate on the north and north-eastern regions of Melbourne, which we did, and obtained a sample of thirty-six families using residential care for their children. Nineteen of these subsequently kept their appointments, a development that limited our ability to generalize. Nevertheless the results were interesting and raised questions about the received wisdom of the times.

Most respondents were positive about the service they received and the quality of care their children were getting. Given the self-selection process in the sample this was not surprising, but the responses were noteworthy given that negative perceptions of residential care were the norm. A few respondents said that the standard of care was too high and created adjustment problems if the child came home. This had temporarily been a concern for me at MFCO. Our children came from poor families but were raised in middle class Glen Waverley.

Given the emphasis on localisation at the time, it was of interest that most parents in the CWAV sample did not rate travel time to the home to see their children as a problem if the time taken was less than an hour. They were more concerned with the standards of care.

Amongst the negative perceptions were the following:

- parents did not understand court processes or wardship, and felt these had been inadequately explained

- workers were overworked and frequently did not have time for them, and worker turnover was a problem

- workers were sometimes perceived as having had no similar experiences to the clients, sometimes did not understand, and came from a different class

- the individual personality of the worker mattered; clients tended to like the service received if the worker was seen as helpful and caring.

- clients liked home visits; they did not like seeing workers in their office

- psychiatrists were often seen as vague, snobbish and unhelpful; clients generally did not respect medical opinions

- clients tended to prefer the smaller children's homes

- most could not distinguish between voluntary and statutory homes, and did not know which kind their children were in, though most had heard rumours that there was little care in Social Welfare Department (SWD) homes and that children were maltreated there

- most did not know where to go for help initially, though most eventually got the services they needed and were helped

- parents wanted more information on their children and a bigger role in decisions

- most did not know much about SWD generally, but their attitudes were generally favourable. Most problems were about the difficulty in contacting workers and the fact there was no after hours service and no after hours appointments (Liddell & Paperin 1978).

Most of this was not a surprise, partly because I had run feedback session with groups of clients at MFCO and had some understanding of the issues which annoyed clients. My experiences with Parents Anonymous (PA)[27] had also exposed me to the high level of antagonism to the medical profession and especially to psychiatrists amongst PA members, who had found their psychiatric treatment unhelpful. The surprises were about the travel time that was seen to be acceptable, the positive attitudes to workers, and in particular the positive attitudes to SWD workers. One tended to hear uniformly negative attitudes expressed about SWD workers, but these clients had a less black-and-white view.

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[27] Parents Anonymous was a self-help group of parents who had abused their children.

Paper Five

Submission to the Committee of Enquiry into Child Care Services in Victoria from the Survival Committee, Children's Welfare Association of Victoria

The Survival Committee of the Children's Welfare Association was formed at a public meeting of voluntary welfare agencies in July, 1974. It developed two major aims:

- The establishment of an Enquiry into family and child welfare services in Victoria.

- The development of an adequate funding base for Victoria's voluntary children's homes.

Negotiations over funding proceeded virtually continuously with the Victorian Government until the announcement of the 1975 State Budget. In the process the Survival Committee developed a number of principles upon which it believed children's homes should be financed. These may be summarised briefly as follows:

- that the independent resources of voluntary homes should not be allowed to erode as they had been doing for many years, and that they should be preserved for use in a variety of ways on services outside the Government's current responsibilities

- that services which were the Government's responsibility (e.g. residential care of the State Wards) should be contracted out by the Government to the voluntary agencies on a cost-for-service basis.

In detail, this meant that the Survival Committee was requesting that the Government meet 100% of the staff costs of voluntary homes and 50% of other costs. The latter figure was set in recognition of the fact that the homes could be reasonably held responsible for some of the extra costs.

Further, the Survival Committee believed that a funding system should aim to develop and support adequate standards in children's homes. This could be done most effectively by funding certain levels of staff-child ratios in the various categories of staff required by the homes.

Recent Development In Funding Voluntary Children's Homes

Until late in 1974, the funding of "Approved" voluntary homes was based on a per capita payment. The inequities of the way this payment was calculated, and of its effects, are well known but are now past history. A new subsidy was announced by the Premier in the Budget speech on 10th September 1975. The new system includes:

- Payments equal to 90% of actual salaries, wages and long-service leave paid and workers' compensation insurance premium costs.

- A per capita weekly payment towards general expenses according to the number of children cared for.

This funding system represents a substantial step forward over the previous system, and ensures that virtually all approved homes will be able to meet operating expenses, and that many of them will be able to use at least a small amount of independent resources to innovate and/or improve residential or other services.

The new funding system still contains some major defects:

- The subsidies are based on the existing services provided by the home; that is, the home will receive 90% of the salaries of the children's home staff if they were employed as at 1st July, 1975. This begs the question of whether the existing staff ratios in the individual homes are adequate or not. A variety of standards, from good to poor, is thus being funded under the new system. It has been suggested that a committee may be set up to review applications for new programs, including applications from homes which desire to improve their staff/child ratios. The effectiveness of such a process, if it is in fact implemented, will be limited by the fact that such applications will naturally be in competition with other sources for limited funds. The improvement in standards in homes where this is necessary is therefore not guaranteed. We believe that the Government did not wish to examine the issue of standards in children's homes (and thus the issue of staff/child ratios) until the Committee of Enquiry had brought out its recommendations.

- The 90% subsidy of salaries has built-in problems. One can predict that, because of industrial developments in the child care field, wage costs will increase faster than other costs in the next few years. Anything less than a 100% subsidy of salaries will thus result in agencies being faced with an increasing gap between subsidies and actual costs.

- As a matter of principle, we believe that services should be contracted for, not only on a basis of adequate standards being set and

maintained, but also on a cost-for-service basis. This means that governments should pay for 100% of all costs of services for which they are responsible.

- Subsidies will be paid on the assumption that the existing ward/non-ward ratios in the homes are maintained. This provision does not encourage the use of residential facilities for emergency placements of children, nor for the prevention of wardship, even though such facilities are an essential part of the range of emergency facilities a community requires.

Purpose Of This Submission

The main purpose of this submission is to analyse issues related to staffing standards in approved children's homes and the implications of this for the funding system. Recommendations on other issues will be included briefly at the end of this report.

Analysis of Current Staffing in Approved Children's Homes

A number of tables are included as an Appendix to this report.[28] These tables summarise the staffing situation in approved children's homes as it was at 1st July, 1975. The first five tables reflect the situation in staff/child ratio terms, with Table 1 being a summary of these ratios organised to show up differences between the different kinds of residential care. Tables 6 to 10 contain the raw figures from which these ratios were derived, with Table 6 being the summary table.

The raw figures were obtained from questionnaires filled out by 38 children's homes. These figures were then collated according to:

- the kind of care offered (as categorised by the respondent from each home):
    - campus cottage
    - congregate care
    - scattered family group homes
    - mixed (where one organisation offered one or more of the above kinds of care).

- the kind of staff employed. When these figures were obtained the following staff categories were grouped together:

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[28] There are a very large number of these tables, and in the interest of brevity they have been omitted from this thesis. However they are available on request from the author.

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- child care workers - the category includes 8-hour and 24-hour workers and assistants
- professional welfare staff (this category includes social workers, welfare officers and psychologists - there being only one example of the latter)
- clerical and administrative staff - these were analysed both separately and as a group
- other specialist staff - this category included all staff with specialist/professional duties who were neither teachers nor professional welfare staff. This group was comprised mainly of youth workers and activities officers and nurses
- a further category - total specialist staff - was developed. This includes the total of professional welfare staff, teachers and other specialists.

Decisions sometimes had to be made as to where some staff had to be categorised. The main areas of difficulty lay in categorising some staff in either clerical or administrative categories, or between administrative and specialist categories. The decisions made are not detailed in this report but are available from the author if required.[29]

Because the reasons why some of these categories listed above were formed are relevant for the later recommendations, they will be referred to briefly.

Some categories - e.g. the various kinds of professional specialists - were too small for individual analysis. From personal contacts and observation one finds that to some extent the roles of these people are similar or overlap from institution to institution, even though their basic training differs.

Our study was not detailed enough to determine just how 8-hour care and 24-hour care workers were used differentially by the many organisations which employ both. This is especially complex when the organisation offers more than one kind of care.

Some organisations seemed very low or very high either in the clerical or administrative categories, suggesting that there was lack of clarity in the respondents' minds as to how to use the categories. The variance was reduced when the categories were combined, and for this reason they are listed as an inclusive category as well as separately.

Because these steps were taken, and because to some extent they imply that there were differences in the way that individuals interpreted the categories, total reliance cannot be placed on the figures. However, the conclusions which we have drawn from them support the general observations of experienced practitioners in the child care field.

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[29] Unfortunately I have not retained the log of these details which I recorded at the time.

Differential Use of Staff in Approved Children's Homes

a: general

The following general observations can be made about the staffing patterns in voluntary children's homes in Victoria.

Staff/child ratios are generally poorest in congregate care institutions. The rate is worst for child care workers (av. 1:10 compared with a little over 1:5 in other types of care - see Table 1). The appearance of at least a fair ratio of specialist staff (1:37 - see Table 1) is misleading. More than half the total specialist staff are accounted for by three congregate care homes which employ teachers who run classes on the institution grounds. The merits of this aside, these homes have few other specialist staff, and other congregate care homes are likewise poorly served. The ratio of specialists to children in congregate care homes is 1:82 if one leaves aside the schools in congregate homes. The ratio of administrative/clerical staff (1:26 compared with an average of about 1:16 in other kinds of care) is more in line with general practice, as is the ratio of domestics (1:13). This attests to the heavy administrative load in maintaining and operating the large facilities involved.

Apart from congregate care institutions, the average child care worker/child ratio in other kinds of care is similar (av. just over 1:5 - see Table 1), as is the deployment of domestic staff (around 1:13, with the exception of campus care, where for various reasons the figures are hard to draw conclusions from). These figures reflect some growing consensus in this area about what is needed.

Organisations running only family group homes rate more favourably than others in a number of categories (all the following figures are from Table 1). Their ratio of welfare professionals compares particularly well (av. 1:27 compared with campus 1:65, congregate a staggering 1:212, and mixed 1:66). In terms of the total use of specialists the comparison is again favourable (group homes av. 1:13 compared with campus 1:45, congregate 1:37 and mixed 1:34). Their ratios of clerical staff are also by far the best (1:21 as against campus 1:35, congregate 1:149, and mixed 1:46). Their ratios of administrative staff are less favourable (1:44 compared with campus 1:30, mixed 1:31, congregate 1:32). The combination of clerical/administrative staff makes the ratios surprisingly close (family group homes 1:14, campus 1:16, mixed 1:18, with congregate care a little higher at 1:26).

With some hesitation, the following possible conclusions are offered about these figures:

- that organisations running only family group homes are probably more professionally dominated, and those running other kinds of care more administration dominated (with variations in both groups of course);

- that organisations running only group homes need less administration because of the nature of the organisation and the type of physical plant associated with it;
- that administrators in organisations set on a campus (whether cottage or congregate) probably back up more on child care and "professional" tasks;
- that professionals in organisations with family group homes, being better backed-up with clerical staff, probably carry out less administrative tasks than those in other organisations - raising questions generally about the effectiveness of staff deployment in most homes;
- that family group homes are less well served by maintenance staff reflects the fact that their facilities by and large are newer, and that because of the nature of the facilities maintenance is more likely to be contracted out.

These conclusions are offered on the basis of large numbers of children, but with relatively small numbers of homes in each category. Thus it is difficult to be sure that one can really point to differences in patterns between the different kinds of homes, though there are obviously some examples where the differences are outstanding. Likewise, it is difficult to know whether the differences are really due to the "nature" of the kind of care offered, or have developed for entirely different reasons. One suspects that the answer lies in a combination of these factors.

b: individual homes

It is not the intention of this submission to analyse the situation in individual homes in detail. Some conclusions about programs and standards can be readily drawn from the raw data in the tables. A few conclusions are suggested which relate more to individual factors in the homes.

By and large it is the bigger homes and the very small ones which have difficulty in providing more than minimal staffing. In particular this is the case with organisations running only one or two group homes (Table 4), large congregate care homes (Table 3), and a number of medium-sized campus and congregate homes (Table 2) and some examples also from the mixed group in Table 5). Those homes of any kind caring for more than 70-80 children, or those with less than 30 (the actual examples of the latter in all cases have less than 12), seem to consistently be examples of this problem. In homes caring for between 30 and 80 children the picture is mixed, and may well be a result of administrative style, philosophy and finances than of size itself. There is most consistency in approaches to staffing within the family group home group, but even thern there is some variation.

Taking the homes as a totality, there is a wide variety in the use of professional staff of all kinds. Out of the 38 homes included in the sample, 10 homes have no specialists at all; 3 others have teachers only; and a further 4 have only "other" specialists. In other words, nearly half of the homes (17 out of 38) have no professional welfare staff. Of the other 21 homes, 10 have

welfare professionals in the ratio of 1:49 or worse, while the other 11 have ratios of better than 1:40. That is, only 11 out of 38 homes have professional welfare staff in anywhere near the numbers required. It must be remembered that such staff must undertake a variety of tasks such as child care staff supervision, consultation and training; family contacts, counselling and home release work; casework with children; holiday host screening, matching and supervision of placements, and so on, in a situation in which most lack adequate back-up on these duties from the Social Welfare Department.

c: conclusions

Drawing specific conclusions from the figures presented and discussed is difficult. There is no local research to be drawn upon which indicates exactly what the desirable state of affairs might be regarding the ratio of staff of various kinds to children. Under the circumstances one must inevitably argue in terms of values and professional opinions. The following represents a consensus opinion of members of the Survival Committee.

Regarding those homes which are generally regarded by us as having the best standards:
- the child care staff/child ratio is 1:4
- the clerical staff/child ratio is 1:20 or better
- the administrator/child ratio is 1:35 or better, and the combined clerical/administrator ratio is 1:12 or better
- the domestic/child ratio is 1:10 or better
- the specialist/child ratio is 1:10 or better.

Recommendations

Standards for care of children are closely interrelated with funding issues. Until more adequate research can be done on staff/child ratios we recommend the following as a basis for funding staff in voluntary children's homes:

Child Care Staff:
The ratio of 1:4 mentioned earlier obscures differences in the use of 8-hour care and 24-hour care workers in different settings. While advocating a ratio of 1:4 as a bench mark, we believe there are instances, especially where the type of care requires rostered staff, that a ratio of 1:3 is necessary. This refers to the total number of child care staff on the payroll, not necessarily the number on duty at any one time. It must be remembered that in many settings the housefather, who is not officially a staff member, in fact functions as an extra child care worker for several hours per day.

Domestics:
The current trend to a ratio of 1:10 is adequate.

Administrative/Clerical staff:
A ratio of at least 1:12 is suggested by current practice, but we recommend a ratio of at least 1:10. Experience shows that where a less favourable ratio exists, professional staff are then obliged to do too much administrative and clerical work, leading to under-utilisation of their professional skills. Combining the clerical and administrative groups for purposes of funding is desirable in order to enable the home to deploy its staff flexibly.

The ratio of specialist staff/children should be 1:10 or better. The arguments demonstrating how poorly off most homes are for essential specialist staff has already been made. Again, to promote flexible deployment of staff, the recommendation is for funding of specialists in general, rather than specifying the ratios of social workers, welfare officers, remedial teachers, youth workers, nurses, etc. The current pattern of diversity in staff deployment by homes which have specialists is a potential strength and a potential source of new knowledge which should be encouraged.

Summary of Funding Recommendations
a) Child care staff - 1:3 to 1:4 (negotiable according to need)
b) Domestics - 1:10
c) Administrative/Clerical - 1:10
d) Specialist - 1:10

Funding of such staff should be on the basis of the Government meeting 100% of staff costs and 50% of all other costs.

Structures to enable adequate negotiation of these and other improvements in standards need to be set up.

The tendency of the current funding system to discourage homes from making emergency (and thus voluntary) placements, or to keep teenagers in care until they are ready to leave, should be tackled. There are two obvious ways in which this can be done:

- homes could demonstrate that they have the capacity to offer and develop a range of service intervention methods, as is currently the case for approved fostering agencies, then be licensed to accept non-wards and to be funded on the same basis as funding for wards.

- for those homes not able to meet such criteria but desirous of keeping working with wards in care until they are mature and ready to leave, approval of such placements by their Social Welfare Department social worker should be sufficient to qualify such a placement for funding as per funding for state wards. The principle to be reinforced is that decisions should be case decisions and not decisions made out of regard for administrative or financial convenience.

- for homes not able to meet such criteria, full funding of non-ward placements should also be possible through them developing linkages with other organisations, and demonstrating in this fashion that the

range of alternatives has been or will be considered for children coming into care in emergencies.

- the problems of organisations involved in child care in either a very large or a very small way are noted with concern. We feel that the figures demonstrate:

    - that an organisation caring for less than 20 children (and probably less than 30 children) is not of sufficient size to support the range of specialist services required, given the state of support and specialist services generally in the community. Only in exceptional circumstances should organisations operating at such a small size be approved children's homes.

    - that large congregate care institutions are similarly unlikely to be able to support adequate standards for a variety of reasons. It must be noted that only 4 of the congregate care homes have more than 80 children, and most of the congregate care homes have far less. Such medium-sized homes have a legitimate role to play in child care. For a variety of reasons, the largest congregate care homes should, as a matter of policy, be phased out.

MJ Liddell
GG Woodfield
On behalf of the Survival Committee

December 1975[30]

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[30] It doubtless was known to the review committee, but we might have made it more explicit that there were other problems hidden in the congregate care figures, especially those run by Catholic orders. It was commonplace for their staff – usually brothers or nuns – to teach all day and double up as child care workers before and after school. They worked unconscionably long hours. The real picture was even worse than the statistics conveyed.

In retrospect I can see why all this might have been too much for the enquiry to endorse, but terms of reference did require recommendations on funding, staffing and standards. The final report did not address these issues at all. In fact, apart from the few recommendations on legislative change, the whole report was notable for its lack of detail.

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