

Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (Archdiocese of Brisbane)

1958 – 1984

Details

The Catholic Family Welfare Bureau in Queensland was formed in 1958 by Archbishop of Brisbane James Duhig. It grew out of an organisation called the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council. In 1984, the organisation became known as Centre Care (later updated again to Centacare in 1991).

The Catholic Family Welfare Bureau grew out of a lay organisation established in 1958 called the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council. This group trained people to carry out “pre marriage conferences”. According to Gleeson, pre-marriage education programs had been coordinated by Catholic lay people since the late 1940s. Volunteers received 8 months’ training before starting to provide counselling. The use of lay volunteer counsellors adopted in Brisbane was the same model used in Britain, and was due to the fact that, unlike other Catholic archdioceses in Australia, Brisbane had no diocesan welfare bureau, trained social workers or priests able to provide full time marriage guidance (p.377-8).

By the early 1960s it was decided that the Council’s work needed to expand. The Archdiocese of Brisbane looked to the Catholic Family Welfare Bureaus in Melbourne and Sydney as models. The CMAC changed its name to the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau in June 1966. With the name change, the services of the CFWB in Brisbane were expanded. It still provided marriage counselling but from this time, child welfare became an integral part of its services.

In the late 1960s, Catholic orders including the Sisters of Mercy and the Sisters of Nazareth approached the Queensland Children’s Services Department, asking that all admissions of Catholic children to institutions be organised by the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. The Department subsequently developed a policy about the admission of Catholic children into “care”.

Around this time, the number of children being admitted to Catholic institutions dropped, due to a new focus on family welfare and efforts to use foster care rather than institutional placements.

According to the 25th anniversary booklet of the CFWB, it introduced a program in 1974 to try and find Aboriginal foster homes for Aboriginal children in Queensland institutions “but this aspect of the Bureau’s work could not be developed satisfactorily”.

The CFWB also played a role in adoptions of children of single mothers, this work being described as assisting “unmarried mothers and prospective parents with the serious decisions concerning a child’s future life” in its anniversary booklet.

Other activities it was involved with in Queensland included the provision of family day care from 1977 and a Big Brother program, first established at its Gold Coast branch in 1979.

In 1984 the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau became known as Centre Care. In 1991, this name was updated to Centacare.

In Brisbane, the Catholic Family Welfare Bureau operated the Ark Transition Hostel (1977-1982).

More info

Chronology

- **Catholic Family Welfare Bureau (Archdiocese of Brisbane) (1958 – 1984)**
 - Centacare Brisbane (1984 - current)

Related Entries

Ran

- [The Ark Transition Hostel \(1977 - 1982\)](#)

Resources

- Amen, Ann, *Archdiocese of Brisbane: a survey of social welfare resources*, 1976

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