

THE CHILD AND FAMILY WELFARE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA — An Introduction:

WHY THE COUNCIL CAME INTO BEING.

The Executive of the N.S.W. Association of Child Caring Agencies, as far back as 1966 was impressed with the value of such an organisation, because, in many matters of child and family welfare there was need for a national policy. Also in the sharing of information between the States great benefits would accrue.

HOW THE COUNCIL CAME INTO BEING.

Early efforts to get people together did not come to fruition, but eventually at the invitation of the N.S.W. Association a meeting was convened in Canberra for 29th and 30th October, 1970, and representatives from N.S.W., Victoria, Tasmania, Queensland and the A.C.T. assembled.

This gathering under the chairmanship of Lt. Col. George Carpenter, resolved that a national body of Family and Child Caring Agencies in some form was needed. A steering Committee was formed to investigate ways and means of establishing such a national body and to prepare a report to be discussed at a meeting of delegates. This meeting was held in Canberra of 26th May, 1971. There were 13 delegates and 13 observers present, representing the A.C.T., Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, W.A., and N.S.W.

It was resolved at this meeting that a National Association of Child Caring Agencies be formed.

Other matters agreed upon were:—

1. The formation of a Provisional Committee.
2. That the name of the organisation be The Child and Family Welfare Council of Australia.
3. That a further national conference of delegates be held on October, 1971.

It was at this conference held in the National Library, Canberra, that the Child and Family Council of Australia was launched. The then Minister for Social Services, the Hon. W.C. Wentworth M.P., attended the official ceremony. His address to an enthusiastic gathering was reported in the National Press.

Child and Family Welfare organisations from N.S.W., Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, W.A., and the A.C.T. were admitted to full membership of the Council at the inaugural meeting.

Reciprocal arrangements were made for consultation and representation between The Child and Family Welfare Council of Australia and the Australian Council of Social Service. A.C.O.S.S. representatives had attended and taken part in the various national conferences leading to the foundation of the Council.

The more important goals of the Council as defined in the Constitution are:—

- (a) To protect and promote the welfare of children and youth by increasing knowledge and advancing popular understanding of the needs of all children and the opportunities and services that are essential to their health, growth and well being.
- (b) To encourage the development of services designed to conserve and strengthen home life and parental care for children, and to help the child welfare agencies and the communities of the nation provide essential social services for children and their families.
- (c) To initiate discussion, consultation and co-operation between voluntary and statutory organisations engaged in social work for children and/or young persons and their families.
- (d) To make such representatives on behalf of such organisations as may seem from time to time to be in their interests and in the interests of the children and families for whom they have a responsibility and of the staff in their employ.

The business of Council is conducted by consisting of not more than 25 members including its officers who consist of a President, two Vice-Presidents, an Hon. Secretary and an Hon. Treasurer. Subsequently, an Executive Secretary was appointed and a national office established.

SOME ACCOMPLISHMENTS

1. **RESEARCH** in the following areas of child and family welfare services was initiated:—

- (a) The Aims, Philosophy, Goals and Standards of Child and Family Welfare Organisation.
- (b) Financing Family Welfare and Residential Child Care Agencies.
- (c) Data Collection.
- (d) Constitution.
- (e) Training Child Care Workers.

2. The results of Australia wide enquiry into professional standards of child care workers conducted by Sister Mary Processus Gregory Dip. Soc. Stud. was published. A foreword was written by the then Minister for Social Security, Mr Bill Hayden, which included the following:—

The Child and Family Welfare Council of Australia has an important role to play in the co-ordination of child care services and in the promotion of new approaches to care, in line with the concept of social welfare as a basic community service”.

3. PUBLICATIONS

A publications committee was set up by the Council to prepare material which is of particular value to workers at the grass roots level of child and family welfare.

- (1) In line with this aim an address by Dr. L. Tierney, Reader in

Social Work at Melbourne University on “Institutional Welfare and the Voluntary Child and Family Welfare Sector”, delivered in Sydney on the occasion of the second annual meeting of the Council was published and distributed throughout Australia. This was funded by the Childrens’ Commission.

- (b) An address by Mr Ian Cox — Director-General of Social Welfare of South Australia on “The Child Care Children” is being prepared for publication. This address was given at the third annual meeting held in Melbourne, April, 1975.
- (c) Further publications will include “The Board and its Management” Rev. Keith Mathiesen and a bibliography of child care literature prepared by E. Lin Reilly, Lecturer in Social Work, University of Queensland.
- (d) Three successful conferences have been held — Canberra, 1973, Sydney, 1974, Melbourne, 1975. These meetings reveal a growing awareness of and interest in the work of the Council.

4. CONTACT WITH GOVERNMENT

- (a) Representation on a sub-committee to the Childrens’ Commission to report upon principles of residential care has highlighted the place Council has obtained in the eyes of the community and government.
- (b) Internal comments by state bodies on the occasional paper entitled “Social Welfare” will

soon be forwarded to A.C.O.S.S. and the Social Welfare Commission.

- (c) Submissions have been made to the Australian Government, Social Welfare Commission and Poverty Enquiry on behalf of member agencies.

COUNCIL’S MEMBERSHIP — Council’s activities have created much interest among workers in the Child and Family Welfare field and membership is increasing.

FULL STATE MEMBERSHIP — representing many hundreds of Child and Family Welfare Agencies throughout Australia.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS — representing associations with an individual membership of many hundreds.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS — These represent a wide even section of Board or Committee members, Administration, Social Workers and others with interest in the welfare of children and young people.

THE FUTURE — The hopes of those who initiated this movement in 1966 and 1968 have been more than realised and the future is full of promise.

Children are the men and women of tomorrow and they deserve the very best we can give. It is our hope and prayer that this Council will continue to be innovative and forthright as a champion of the children’s cause and in particular to those who are disadvantaged in any way.

* The National Office of the Chief of Family Welfare Council is at 103 Bathurst St., Sydney.