

"Who Cares ?" ..... "Community Child Care." BY RUTH CRW

Two handbooks published in April this year herald in the turning point in the provision of family support services.

"Who Cares ? Family Problems, community Links and other Helping Services " has been written by Jean McCaughey, Sheila Shayer, Helen Ferber and others. (published by Sun Books for the Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research, University of Melbourne)

"Community Child Care Manual " has been written by Winsome McCaughey Patricia Sebastian and others ( Published by Greenhouse Publications for Community Child Care, 67 Brunswick Street Fitzroy)

The direct connection between these two publications was given spontaneous recognition . This fact has been shown by the number of letters published in the Age during the first weeks of April .... letters from Jean Miller (Community Child Care ), Jan Cropley (Noble Park) . Maureen LeBehen (St. Kilda) . Elizabeth Edwards (Sunshine), Margaret Pickering (Deer Park), Ann Morrow (Malvern) All of these letters commended the "Who Cares?" report on its emphasis on the need for a network of family support services. A leaflet "Who Cares ? We Care" prepared by June Ryan (Peck's Road Sydenham) and signed by about thirty people (contact point and people for Neighbourhood Centres) enthusiastically embraced the findings of the "Who Cares ?" report and called for the assistance for children's centres which provide "homely, moving care in a local house, support to parents in emergencies , A happy joyous atmosphere that teaches children how to socialise at an early age."

Both "Community Child Care" and "Who Cares ?" quote the world famous anthropologist Margaret Mead who recently said... "We now expect the family to achieve alone what no other society has ever expected an individual family to accomplish unaided. In effect, we call upon the individual family to do what the whole clan used to do "

Community Child Care gives pride of place to its definition of the word "community" stating....

"The word community has a thousand meanings and references. In the manual the term 'community' refers to that process of interaction between people, knowing and being known, caring and being cared for sharing, exchanging, trading and so on. The geographic context in which the process can occur most easily in the field of child care is that of the immediate neighbourhood and the municipality. Proximity and accessibility are essential because women and with infants and toddlers frequently do not have transport and must walk. Older children also depend on their two feet to get around."





## **Services**

- \* Doctors are often the first and sometimes the main source of information of families in need of support. Need to streamline referrals through social workers at group practice or community health centres and the municipal social workers all of which need to be aware of informal care-taker network. Some-one with a "roving commission" who is accessible by 'phone and willing to take trouble to supply and obtain assistance is essential in such a scheme.
- \* Citizens Advice Centres, wherever they are closely associated with municipal social workers, have made significant contribution to community aid services. Need for C.A.C.s to be more acceptable, comprehensive and effective.
- \* There is a distrust of State Social Welfare Department. Need for regional offices of the Dept to develop preventive role
- \* The mobility of social work staff is a continuing problem. Need for helpers who "stay put". A middle aged woman with an established home and ties in the local community could ~~help~~ prove more approachable and effective than a young social worker with few local ties.
- \* There is a grave danger that old people and passive welfare client-  
clients are reduced to the role of recipients only. Need to find ways for many more people from all sections of the community to be able to contribute voluntary service. Suggestion ~~that~~ that ~~the~~ Commonwealth Social Security could notify municipal social work department of people who are on retirement etc.
- \* There are serious deficiencies in regular community services. Need for a shift of emphasis so that schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centres and so on regard the relationships between the service and the community as of equal importance to its specialised function.
- \* Statutory services ~~used to be~~ were least disliked when they were made available at the municipal level. Need for services to be localised.. this also provides better opportunities for co-operation between care-taking individuals, voluntary organisations, and local welfare services,
- \* Younand Committee of Inquiry into local Government in Victoria in 1972 concluded that local councils are playing a more and more important part in welfare services. Need to encourage discussion and ~~interest in the general questions of financial relationships~~ between different levels of government, especially how the formulae effects welfare spending.
- \* There is a general assumption that those at high level planning know what "we should do to help them" on the assumption that "we know what they need". The research has shown that there is a great deal to be learnt about what people need and want and how best to meet these needs and wants.