

A last resort? – a national inquiry

August 2004

This article is reprinted with the permission of Justice for Refugees SA, website: www.justiceforrefugees.asn.au

A last resort? is a damning report of the federal government's treatment of children in detention centres. Justice for Refugees SA supports its recommendations.

What's in it might not be news to many of us as it clearly argues that the detention environment itself is the source of many of the health problems for children – and rightly points out that it is the federal government's responsibility to properly care for these children.

The National Inquiry into Children in Immigration Detention was undertaken by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) examine the laws and the treatment concerning children in detention and to see if they met Australia's obligations under international law, principally the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Convention states that 'the arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be ... used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time.'

While not a general investigation into the systemic behaviours of detention centre managements, by revealing the system's impact on children it does tell us what is going on. The stories and impact of detention are revealed through the voices of the children, the independent experts and others from State mental health and

child protection agencies – making it far more than a dusty public document.

The major findings were that Australia failed to meet its obligations for these children making 'numerous and repeated breaches of the Convention'. It called for their release within four weeks of the report being tabled.

More than 92% of these children were found to be refugees – yet by the end of 2003, their average stay in the detention camps was one year, eight months and eleven days. The majority were 12 years of age or younger. Not including those processed offshore, the Inquiry estimates there were 2,184 children who applied for refugee protection visas between July 1999 and June 2003.

The mandatory detention of those who arrive without visas has led to the majority of these children spending months and years in detention in conditions damaging to many of the adults around them. The longer they are kept in detention, the more their mental health deteriorates.

It's a tough read, but for those who want to know more a hard copy of the report's summary is available free (72pages) - a CD version and the full report do cost - just go to www.hreoc.gov.au to order your copies or to download the full report (900+ pages).

In this issue

- **A last resort? – a national inquiry**
- **Child Care Online**
- **New ECA Publications**
- **Notice for registered teachers**
- **Early intervention to prevent media harm**

Advance Notice

The ECA professional development committee is planning a half day of workshops for early childhood professionals, Saturday 16th October, 2004.

There will be a presentation by Dr.Pam Winter followed by a number of small group workshops. Watch this space for more details.

Attention Registered Teachers

EXPIRY of TEACHER REGISTRATION

Does your teacher registration expire on 31 January 2005? — *Check your Certificate of Teacher Registration.*

If your registration is due to expire, an application form for an extension of your teacher registration will be sent to your postal address by the end of November 2004.

CHANGES TO POSTAL ADDRESS

Please notify the Teachers Registration Board **in writing** of any changes to your postal address.

- fax to: (08) 8226 2667
- email to: info@trb.sa.edu.au
- post to: Teachers Registration Board of SA, Level 6, 70 Pirie Street, ADELAIDE, 5000

Your employer does not pass this information to the Board.

Published by:
AECA SA Branch
c/- Lady Gowrie Child Centre
39a Dew Street Thebarton
SA 5031

Child Care Online

Centrelink is currently pursuing the development of online servicing options for the administration of Child Care Benefit (CCB) to approved child care providers. The development of an online service channel is in addition to the service channels currently offered to approved child care providers.

The types of online functions that will be made available to approved child care providers over the next three years include:

- upfront checking of customer Child Care Benefit (CCB) fee reductions throughout the quarter at a time that suits the child care provider (for example daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly);
- lodgement of Child Care Benefit (CCB) provider claims (after the end of the quarterly claim period);
- notification, viewing and download of customer Child Care Benefit (CCB) assessment information as the change is notified (i.e. 'real-time');
- notification, viewing and download of child care provider financial information and reports as needed; and
- access to Child Care Benefit (CCB) help and reference material as needed.

The development of online servicing will occur in various stages over the next two to

three years. Initial claim lodgement, customer CCB assessment viewing and online reference material and help should be available by September 2005, with remaining functionality released by December 2006.

Consultation has commenced with the child care industry to determine their business and usability requirements. Workshops were conducted in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne with groups of providers during July 2004. Further requirements gathering workshops are planned to be held with the industry during October 2004. Providers interested in participating in these workshops should contact their local Child Care Payment Team on 1800 050 021.

Centrelink will also be liaising with child care software providers regarding planned changes to the Centrelink electronic standards. A forum for software providers is planned to be established during the last half of the 2004 calendar year. Further information regarding this forum will be made available over the coming months.

From September 2003 information regarding Child Care Online will be available on the Centrelink Website at www.centrelink.gov.au.

New ECA Publications

Use online technologies successfully: A workbook for children's services and other small businesses

Derek Newman

Use online technologies successfully: A workbook for children's services and other small businesses provides a practical, step by step approach to implementing online technology solutions to a range of issues in the provision of children's services. This book includes worksheets with many examples to give those who are contemplating using online technology or have already begun this approach, an excellent resource. An extensive listing of website resources also makes this book a valuable ongoing reference tool.

Price: \$25.95 (2004)

ECA CODE: PUB36

ISBN: 1 875890 72 6

Revisiting celebrations with young children

Elizabeth Dau and Kerryn Jones

Revisiting celebrations with young children is a timely addition to the debate surrounding what should be celebrated in early childhood programs. This book is written by very experienced early childhood educators Elizabeth Dau and Kerryn Jones, both of whom have a strong interest in anti-bias approaches and social inclusion. A challenge is given to early childhood professionals to involve children and families in decisions about local celebrations. *Revisiting celebrations with young children* emphasises the importance of children and families seeing the significant community events in their home life reflected in educational life. As well as examining traditional celebrations, the discussion includes examples of the ways in which significant achievements in children's lives and learning can also be celebrated.

Price: \$14.95 (2004)

ECA CODE: RIP0402

ISBN: 0 9751936 9 4

Everyday learning series

The *Learning at home series* has been given a new name, a new look and a new price. The *Learning at home series* will now be known as the *Everyday learning series*. The *Everyday learning series* focuses attention on the everyday ways in which children can be supported in their growth and development. It is for all those who are involved in children's development and learning, including early childhood professionals in all children's service, parents, grandparents and others with an ongoing responsibility for young children.

Everyday learning in the backyard

Lyn Bower

Everyday learning in the backyard is the first title of the new *Everyday learning series*. It contains a wealth of simple yet creative ideas, to make the most of young children's natural desire to explore their outdoor surroundings.

PRICE: \$14.95 (2004) or \$40.00 for a yearly subscription (4 issues)

ECA CODE: LAH0402

ISSN: 1448-045X

ISBN: 0 9751936 8 6

To order call National Office 1800 356 900 or email sales@earlychildhood.org.au

Early intervention to prevent media harm

The *Mind Over Media* series of Fact Sheets are produced to help early childhood professionals to educate parents and caregivers about the effects of inappropriate media use on early brain development.

All seven *Mind Over Media* Fact Sheets, explore the role that careful choice of media can play in assisting young children to develop:

- healthy relationships
- good social and emotional skills
- a strong and confident sense of self
- good language skills
- thinking skills—analytical and creative
- a realistic understanding of the world.



The first Fact Sheet, *Mind Over Media: Early choices for healthy development* provides an introduction to the series and gives snippets about the role that careful choice of media can play in assisting in children's development.

The second Fact Sheet, *Mind Over Media: Developing Healthy Relationships* is now available and deals with the ways that infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers build relationships with their primary caregiver. Both are available to download from Young Media Australia's web site.

If you want to sign up to receive these unique resources please visit the web site <http://www.youngmedia.org.au/mindovermedia> for further information and an application form. Alternatively, you may call Young Media Australia on (08) 8376-2111 or email info@youngmedia.org.au