

Thank you for the opportunity to give this paper and talk today.

I appear here as a member of the Care Leavers of Australia Network. At CLAN, we welcome this opportunity to speak with you, for as the educators in this room, attending this conference and working in the field, you are, for the majority of us, perhaps the only educators we will come into contact with in our lives post 'care'.

This is because on the whole care leavers and children presently in care do not get a decent education. When and if they do, it primarily occurs in the custodial, prison, institutional, or juvenile justice environment. Obviously, this type of environment is not the greatest place in which to receive an education, and no doubt many papers given at this conference will address the difficulties that prison based learning and teaching encounters.

This paper will reiterate some of those difficulties, but ironically for CLAN, the custodial environment must also be seen as an opportunity for our members, and for those who share our background, to have access to at least some further education.

Unfortunately, this is also an area in which our specific problems have to date been ignored or overlooked. It is only in the last year and a half that the NSW Department of Corrective Services has publically stated that ex-State wards and care leavers are vastly over-represented in prison.

Wider, it is only since the inquiries into institutional abuse of children in the U.K. and Canada that consideration of education for children in care in this country has even been considered, belatedly, as important by the child welfare industry.

The purpose of this paper, I hope, is not just to inform you of our place in the systems in which you work, but hopefully to invigorate you in your workplaces, so that you can find out how better to assist us to achieve, how to better recognise our problems, and hopefully, through this, how to make your jobs perhaps a little easier.

At CLAN, we hope that this although our first, will not be our last major contact with your profession. We hope that we can work together to obtain greater results for care leavers, greater resources for you to do your valuable work, and more research, understanding, and exploration of the issues that ex-State wards and care leavers face.

When we think about these problems, and shortly, consider some of the scant evidence that exists on our under achievement as a group, it is interesting to note that we started the education systems in this country.

The Orphan Schools were the first schools in the colony. Established by Governor King, they were given a massive grant of land, some 2000 acres, the rents from which were to support the orphans, thus making us partially self sufficient. (ironically the 1818 replacement for the 1801 Female Orphan School is now part of the University of Western Sydney in East Parramatta, while another is the Norma Parker prison).

The first taxes raised in the colony, along with all the fines and auctions of impounded imports were used to provide for orphans. This should have kept us very well supplied, given the colonies' seemingly unquenchable thirst for rum and spirits, but one doesn't have to go beyond the NSW police force of the day, the Rum Corp, to know what happened to that part of the endowment.

However, it was the loss of the orphan lands to the Church and Schools Corporation, and the ensuing sectarian warfare over the 'Commonwealths children' concerning both Catholic and Anglican, which grew into the ever present battles of 'state aid' to private sectarian education, that led to the orphan school's demise and prevented it challenging the afterthoughts of NSW education, The Kings School, Scotts College and the University of Sydney.

Under such acrimonious religious rivalry, children in care disappeared as central themes of governance, from high on the minds of Bligh, Macquarie, and King. In the 21st century we have disappeared behind ranks of P.R. teams in government and NGO services who put interesting spins on problems such as "previously known to DOCS" in relation to the mounting dead.

The second last great prison reformer - after the less successful Mr. Tony Vinson - Comptroller General Nietienstien, arose from the child welfare system under the last statesmen-leader to take an active personal interest in the child welfare system. The 'Father of Federation' Mr. Henry Parks, should also be known as 'the father of fostering'.

Ironically, while the education system in NSW started with the orphan schools its genesis in fact arose as a form of crime prevention, which may go some way to explaining the welfare/justice nexus.

In 1794 the Rev. Richard Johnson, the chaplain to the new colony stated

"If any hopes are to be formed of any Reformation being effected in this Colony, I believe it must begin amongst those of the rising generation".

Reformation was clearly to be effected by education. This is shown in directions to Bligh that:

"In a settlement where the irregular and immoral habits of the parents are likely to leave their children in a state particularly exposed from similar vices, you will feel the peculiar necessity that the government should interfere on behalf of the rising generation and by the assertion of authority as well as encouragement, endeavour to educate them in religious as well as industrial habits...you are authorised to make such advances as you may deem requisite to afford the means of education to the Children of the Colony."

So seriously was this taken that within a decade almost 50% of the colonies' children were receiving some form of instruction. In England it is thought only 7% were being so schooled . This starting with Governor Kings Female Orphan School in 1801.

Good intentions aside however, full participation was not achieved until much later, and the children for whom the education system was initially set up as a preventative tool would have to wait until the likes of the Sussex St Ragged School opened in 1862.

At that time the NSW Select Committee on the Conditions of the Working Class in the Metropolis found that there was over 1000 destitute children in Sydney, and the Sussex Street

"benefactors stated that five such schools were really needed to absorb 'all the juvenile vagabonds in Sydney'".

These schools offered little more than rudimentary maths with missionising Scriptures and singing, being as they were, dependant on public benevolence.

Such children would continue to await fulfilment of Bligh's instructions, while elitist attitudes of social exclusion such as that expressed at the Second Australasian Conference in 1891

"the State school would be equally unsuitable for neglected or gutter children, as (they were established) for those of a higher grade... they

ought not to be thrust into the ranks of clean, tidy children, even if they wished it, which they do not"

held sway.

The Church of England also held the view that a restricted education was a tool to use in dealing with lower class children

"to fit them for the station in life to which they were born."

If one looks at the history of child welfare up to this very day, one would be forgiven for thinking that such attitudes were amongst us still. As the Anglican Church's Burnside discussion paper *The Educational Needs of Children and Young People In Out of Home Care: Making the Grade*, June 2000 states:

"the educational needs of young people in care have largely been neglected, with disastrous consequences for the children and young people...Research is now building up from several areas that must move the focus on equality of access to educational advantages from lip-service mention in case planning to a major emphasis in all planning with the child... "

For almost all the children going through the system from its inception to this very day, this has meant at best manual labour for the boys and domestic service for the girls, at worst a life of iniquity, crime and vice for both.

While we at CLAN welcome the child welfare industries' new found interest in the education of children in care after 200 years of neglect, we also fear that little will be initiated by that industry or the government to address the needs of the few hundred thousand citizens who have gone through that system in the last half century alone.

While we expect this to be the case, we still want to see that our brothers and sisters get a better deal than at present, hence this approach at a conference for your field and colleagues.

Why is it important for prison based educators to know this history, and to understand our situation ?

Australia

Little research exists in this country about our over representation in prison.

Research suggests that 33-50% of women prisoners have been in care as children. Up to similar levels for children in NSW Juvenile Justice .

"experience with children under the care of the department shows that unless appropriate forms of care are given, separated children are most likely to develop these characteristics: tries to be the centre of attention: low language skills: anxiety reactions to criticism and punishment: emotional aloofness: behavioural deviancies: behavioural outbursts: tension: nervous symptoms: excessive fears: difficulty forming peer relationships: apathy: lack of drive: self gratification behaviours...feelings of inadequacy: personal and familial identity confusion: lack of insight into adjustment problems: resentfulness: self consciousness: self centredness: need for dependency- (upon, while maintaining a) distrust of adults" .

While in care as juveniles, make up half of all homeless youth. The extent of adult care leavers' homelessness is unknown.

35% of children in care have attention deficit disorder or conduct disorders compared with an estimated 3 to 6% of the general population.

50% of children in care in NSW completed year 10 or less.

Of 45 children a Reiby Juvenile Justice institution 87% were registered on the DOCS CIS, (client information system) 62% had 3 or more registrations, 42% were in substitute care for at least one episode, 19% were presently in the substitute care system, and 13% were State wards.

Other Countries

UK

80% of care leavers aged 16-24 are unemployed... 54% of young offenders ex-care while only 5% had offended previous to entry into care.... 25% of 15 to 18 year olds pregnant or has a child.... 70% of homeless young people have been in care.... Only 2% went on to tertiary education compared with 41% of the general population... It is the care system that creates the failure, not the children.

67% experience psychiatric disorders compared with 15% of the general population... 50-70% of care leavers have no formal qualifications compared to 6% of the general population, and only 12-19% go on to further education compared with 68%.

At this stage I shall wrap up this discussion with just a few more notes. Obviously prison educators will have a good understanding of what this means in your day to day practice. Many of the individuals you work with from this background have previously been let down by systems of all sorts, including the education system. For a large number, school will be associated with feelings of inadequacy, revulsion, distrust, isolation and physical abuse.

For a smaller number, school and teachers will also be associated with sexual assault. Many ex-wards and care leavers will try to avoid the education system. This of course closes so much of the world from them. 20 years ago, enough unskilled employment existed in our society that it is feasible that wards may have done better than they do today. Certainly in our new world, few will emerge from this background to go on to own their own homes, go to university, take overseas holidays, maybe even derive joy from simply reading a book.

But in a world that tells us we should aim for these things, and excludes us through the basics such as education, a sense of belonging, purpose and self esteem, perhaps the illegal means don't look all that bad.

Footnotes:

1. NSW Department of Corrective Services, Submission to the Select Committee on the Increase in the Prison Population, Interim Report - Issues relating to Women, 2000
2. see: An Act for vesting the Orphan School Estates in the Trustees of the Clergy and School Lands in the Colony of New South Wales 2nd Aug. 1826 (7 Geo/IV No4)
3. Rev. Marsden's name for wards of the State.
4. See Carrington, K. Offending Girls. Allen and Unwin. Sydney 1993
5. Historical Records of Australia.
6. Brown, R.G. (ed) Children Australia. Allen and Unwin. Sydney 1980.p. 23

7. Murray, James. Larrikins: 19th Century Outrage. Lansdowne Press. Melbourne 1973. p.105
8. ibid p.105
9. ibid p.106
10. Denton, B. Prisons, Drugs and Women: Voices from Below. National Drug Strategy Research Report Series. Report No.6 Commonwealth of Australia 1995. Table 6 p.37 and discussion p.34 (41% of women in care as children)
10. Kilroy, D. When will you see the real us? Women in Prison. Paper presented at the Women in Corrections: Staff and Clients Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology in conjunction with the Department for Correctional Services SA. Adelaide, 31 October ? 1 November 2000 (50% of women had been in care as children)
10. Hastings, F. A Census of Women In Custody In NSW 1998: Interim results from the women in custody survey. NSW Dept. Corrective Services, Women's Services Unit 1999. Tables 44 and 45 (33% of women removed from families as children)
11. NSW Cabinet Office Draft Youth Policy Statement. NSW Government. Sydney December 1996 (17% of juvenile justice State wards)
12. Berry, M. et al. Inquiry into Youth Under Institutional and Other Forms of Care: a submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Social Welfare Inquiry. Dept. Youth and Community Services. Sydney 1984. p.61 NB. still probably the best description of wards problems made public to date, also please note "most likely to develop..." .
13. Earliest recognition of this Burdekin, B. Our Homeless Children. Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission NSW 1989. NB virtually every major book on homeless youth since has devoted one or two paragraphs to this fact.
14. Community Services Commission Just Solutions: wards and juvenile justice. CSC Sydney March 1999.
15. Cashmore, J. Paxman, M. Longitudinal Study of Wards Leaving Care. Social Policy Research Centre. Uni NSW: NSW Department of Community Services. 1996
16. NSW Department of Juvenile Justice. Reiby detainees cross checked with

DoCS CIS. Undated- unreleased though likely late 1999 early 2000.

17. Professor Sonia Jackson. Making the Grade. Seminar at the Centre for Ministry Uniting-Care Burnside. North Parramatta 30th October 2001.

18. House of Commons. Select Committee on Health Inquiry into Children Looked After By Local Authorities. Second Report. HMSO U.K. 1998

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