

THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD: MAKING IT REAL AND MAKING IT WORK

Presented by Kathy Walker at the Second National Child Care Conference on June 24th, 1994 at Ultimo

The discussion paper of this presentation reflects on our awareness of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child existence, and/or what it actually means. Australia ratified the Convention of the Rights of the Child in 1992.

Through the Convention, children are not just objects of social concern, but are perceived to have a legal and ethical right to be heard, the basic human right for each child to have their needs and rights fulfilled.

Before workers in the Early Childhood profession can make the Convention work, they need to see it as something "real" and relevant to children. **The Convention applies to all children, not only those in impoverished circumstances or those suffering abuse, but to help all children to reach their potential.**

Specific articles in the relate to aspects such as 'play experiences appropriate to the age', 'education directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential', 'the right to have freedom of expression', and 'State parties take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working families have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities'. There are 54 articles in the Convention and all relate to basic human rights for all children.

Kathy Walker believes we all need to:

1. know about the Convention
2. inform others of its existence and importance
3. see the relationship between the Convention and our Code of Ethics
4. educate our students and those working directly with children
5. challenge some current work practices which do not allow children to reach their

potential

6. speak out for children and relate advocacy directly to the Rights of the Child and

7. hold the Government accountable for its legal responsibility to uphold the Convention.

She suggests we explore the relationship between advocacy and children's needs, start close to home rather than globally, from within own centre, inform parents of the Convention and consider a centre's timetable in terms of children's needs for sleep, play and eating, rather than staff needs. Each child has the right to time and attention from adults, to be disciplined so that we uphold basic respect for the child and not punished by ignoring the child's needs and rights.

The Rights of children need to be upheld and understood by adults other than those in the Early Childhood field - by parents, teachers, members of the community and politicians. To make the Convention real, we need to become familiar with what it is and what it means, to inform others, then help support others alongside whom we work, to make it work for all children.

Florence Rankin

**NOW OVERDUE
BY 21 MONTHS!!!**

Perhaps it's an elephant!

**Australia's First Report to the
Committee on the Rights of the
Child.**

The Australian Government's first report on its implementation of UNCROC is now 20 months overdue and is showing no sign of emerging from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department.