

Conference on the Rights of the Young Child.

To enable as many people to attend as possible, the AGM for 1994-5 will be held in July (location not yet decided).

## European Conference on Monitoring Children's Rights

*Belgium, (11-14 Dec)*

This international conference will focus on two important questions relating to Article 43 of UNCROc: WHAT is to be reported and BY WHOM?

DCI-Australia will be represented by Helen Bayes and Ron Frey. Other DCI Sections attending include Cameroon, Guatemala, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland and UK. DCI member, Philip Alston, is a keynote speaker and Nigel Cantwell of the DCI International Secretariat is a panel member.

The Conference will examine the lack of knowledge about children due to their invisibility in demographic statistics and the lack of research on how children interpret events and give meaning to them.

It will also analyse the 'self-executing force' of the Convention, ie. its requirement of regular reporting by participating governments. Finally, it will look at what national and international courts and non-government organisations can do to monitor the implementation of UNCROc.

## Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

DCI-IS has received a copy of the January 1994 Report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Sale of Children, Child prostitution and Child Pornography, Prof Viti Muntarbhorn.

Prof Muntarbhorn has asked for comments on his recommendations, information on Australian strategies and recent information or cases, action and practices. *Help is needed to prepare our response! Please let Helen Bayes know if you would like to be involved in this.*

## NATIONAL CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH LAW CENTRE NATIONAL SUMMIT, SYDNEY, 28 OCTOBER 1994

DCI was represented by two members at the Summit, which launched the publication **A justice strategy for children and young people.**

The **Justice Strategy** is made up of four integrated components:

- \* A National Children's and Young people's **legal advocacy program** funded by the federal government and commencing in mid-1995, (for those denied access to justice);
- \* a review by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) of **barriers to justice** for children and young people and their rights and protection under the law;
- \* a **Commissioner for Children** to act as a watchdog for children and to monitor and report on the implementation of children's rights in Australia;
- \* a **Charter of Children's and young people's rights** enacted in Commonwealth legislation.

**Moira Rayner, the Centre's chairperson,** noted that children should not be seen as commodities in the court process and that their legal representatives need to listen to them.

**Brian Butler, chair SNAICC, the Secretariat of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care,** called for separate legislation to protect Aboriginal children in view of the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice and welfare systems.

**Robert Ludbrook, Director of NC&YLC,** raised concern that young people might be left out of the Commonwealth Government's planned Justice Statement, due out later this year.

Concern was expressed that the International Year of the Family will have been devalued without a national justice strategy funded on a recurrent basis.

Two resolutions were passed by the Summit participants.

*Firstly*, that the Federal Government provide funding support for the National Children's and Young People's Legal Advocacy Program in association with the NC&YLC and appropriate state-based organisations.

The Summit called on all children's and youth advocates to 'work in partnership with all other disadvantaged groups to secure adequate recognition and resources for all Australians to enjoy access to justice.'

*Secondly*, that 'the NY&YLC and the National Network of Children's and Young People's Legal and Advocacy Services:

(i)...invite roundtable discussions and representatives of those interest groups that are presenting submissions to the Federal Government for funds in response to the report of the Access to Justice Committee, in order to develop a co-ordinated strategy for the presentation of those submissions; and

(ii)...co-ordinate the development of state-by-state plans in consultation with relevant state organisations and individuals.'

## **BOOK REVIEW**

### ***The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Australia***

Edited by Harvey, J., Dolgopol, U., & Castell-McGregor, S.

Produced by the South Australia Children's Interests Bureau, 1993.

The editors are to be congratulated on the timely appearance of this book. UNCROC is one of the more important measures affecting children that has happened in recent years. Australians need to become knowledgeable about this convention and its implications for institutions, attitudes and practices that impact upon children and youth in this country,

The book is a collection of papers from a forum in 1992 that included academics, government policy makers and non-government organisations. The range of contributors makes it a valuable and varied resource.

The papers are divided into sections and four of the sections look at particular themes - *Practical applications of the Convention, Law and Society, Research and Priority Setting and Advocacy*. The plenary section contains a range of papers leading into these issues and young people were given the opportunity to speak for themselves.

A volume like this is overdue and I would like to see something of this calibre coming out on an annual basis.

*A particular strength of the collection is the attention given to the Aboriginal child and youth population.* For child advocates in Australia this is an obvious priority area. I was also impressed at the input young people had to make. The quote from Leila Berg at the beginning of these few pages was a stark reminder of how often adults speak for children and how different our perceptions of the world, and how it works, can be.

This newsletter was produced by the Wollongong Branch of DCI - Australia. It was prepared by Berenice Nyland, Rosie Wells, Joan Ausburn and Florence Rankin. Word processing was done by Florence Rankin. The views expressed in Australian Children's Rights News are not necessarily those of DCI. **Merry Christmas** 