

## FORUMS AIM TO WIPE OUT SCHOOL BULLYING

Violence and bullying in schools will be the focus of forums held in each state and territory next year in an effort to stamp out the destructive and anti-social behaviour, Federal Schools Minister Ross Free announced (Illawarra Mercury Dec 14, 1994)

## GHENT 11-14 DECEMBER 1994. EUROPEAN CONFERENCE MONITORING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.

This conference was organised by the Children's Rights Centre at the University of Ghent. The University was overwhelmed by the numbers who registered to attend this conference. As knowledge and awareness of the Convention grows so does interest in trying to make this document meaningful in practice. The UNICEF Director for Europe said in his address that "...never before have so many people been talking about children's rights."

This state of affairs has arisen because of the wide acceptance of the UNCROc. Universal recognition might even be at hand but this brings with it problems of monitoring and interpretation. Professor Phillip Alston from Australia discussed the question of what is meant by monitoring and the importance of the notion of government accountability. This was reflected by the UNICEF speaker who referred to the issue of states parties seeing the Convention as a statement of intention rather than something to be implemented.

Some papers at the conference sounded quite controversial,

especially one from Denmark, and replies from discussants provided much stimulation and food for thought.

The two Australian representatives from DCI-Australia - Helen Bayes and Ron Frey - were both impressed at the prominence that the Convention has in European law. In her report to the National Committee of DCI-Australia, Helen emphasised that a thread running throughout the conference was an understanding of how important surveillance, or monitoring of the Convention is going to be. Many speakers referred to the role of NGOs in this capacity.

The message from the conference was that we must work towards gaining broad public awareness and support for the Convention and look for monitoring and morally binding systems to move towards what Nigel Cantrell mentioned in his paper as "distributive justice".

## NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

### DCI-CANBERRA

DCI-Canberra's conference, on 9-10 March, Children's Rights: are we nearly there yet? is building up into an exciting event. A densely-packed programme of discussion papers, panels and workshops and a hypothetical will give plenty of opportunity to explore the application of UNCROc in many contexts, such as physical punishment, volunteering, schools, domestic violence, mediation and multiculturalism.

"Taking Children's Rights Seriously" will be the first keynote