

This seminar will examine how peace education can meet and promote the goals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

For information: International Networking Events
The British Council, 1 Beaumont Place
Oxford, OX1 2P.

15-17 May 2000

"Step by Step"- Strategies for child welfare tomorrow

European Forum for Child Welfare
Salzburg, Austria

The objectives of this conference are to discuss the present situation and future options, exchange our experiences and views in working groups and construct and present models of best practice as strategies for tomorrow.

For information: Phone +43/662/431355-63
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9 March 2000

"Children and Media- losing Control or taking charge"

Institute of Education, University of London
This intensive one-day conference will be of interest to media producers, regulators, policy-makers, researchers and all those concerned with children's welfare. The conference will discuss the latest research into the child audience, debate the future of media regulation and discuss the possibilities for children to become producers of media in their own right.

For information: Paula Larkins
Conference Office, Institute of Education
20 Bedford Way
London WC1H 0AL

Gay and Lesbian Access to Assisted Reproductive Technology

A LETTER TO THE AGE FROM DCI-AUSTRALIA

The Australian Section of Defence for Children International is the local link in a worldwide chain of non-government organisations that promote children's rights. We are concerned that last week's editorial on gay and lesbian access to assisted reproductive technology [*The Sunday Age*, Editorial Opinion, 21 November 1999) contains a number of mistaken assumptions.

So far as the procedures are concerned, although some technologies are expensive, the most common procedure sought is merely the insemination of sperm that has been screened for potentially fatal diseases. It cannot be in the public interest to deny access to such services in circumstances when we know that children are in fact born to lesbian mothers without the benefit of the screening safeguards.

Readers should also know that the words of the current Victorian law also bars single women regardless of

their sexual orientation. A similar prohibition in South Australia was found to be constitutionally invalid by that State's Supreme Court and the same reasoning would apply here.

The real starting point for community thinking is that there is no research basis for denigrating the capacity of gay and lesbian couples or individuals to parent effectively. That fact has been recognised by courts and legislatures both here and overseas.

There are, however, people whose history, for example of violence, would warrant excluding them from using assisted reproductive technology. Judgment calls in particular cases are legitimate. Blanket bans should not be supported on the basis of supposed "societal attitudes at this time". Doing so only entrenches discrimination. And the children already born into gay and lesbian families suffer the brunt.

Badge please, sheriff Burke

Letter to the Editor, *The Australian*, from DCI-Australia National Committee Member, Kerry Walker, published 14 February 2000

On ABC national radio (AM, 11/2) the chief sheriff of the Northern Territory, Denis Burke, likened the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre in Darwin to a boarding school. From this, I can only conclude that mandatory sentencing has no connection with the criminal punishment system. It must be an educational attendance incentive.

Mr Burke also told us that the boy didn't really die in custody: he was sent to his room for being disobedient just like, in similar circumstances, father Den would send

his son to his room. Inexplicably this young Aboriginal boy committed suicide.

Is Denis Burke serious? Here we have the tragic case of an orphaned young Aboriginal boy removed from his community and family supports who did not suicide in the comfort of his own home - he died by hanging in Territory custody.

Denis Burke presides over a regime which metes out unconscionable and cruel punishment to the most vulnerable people in the territory. It's time Sheriff Burke hung up his spurs and handed in his gun and badge. A life has been lost.