

# Literature highlights

## Adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse

### **Sexual abuse in childhood and sexual dysfunction in adulthood: An Australian population-based study.**

Najman, J. M. et al. (2005). *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 34(5), 517–526.

Self-reported sexual functioning in individuals reporting a history of childhood sexual abuse (CSA) was examined in this study. The study used a representative sample of the Australian population, selecting 1,793 people between the ages of 18 and 59 from all states and territories. Approximately one-third of women and one-sixth of men reported unwanted sexual experiences before the age of 16. The study showed a significant association between CSA and symptoms of sexual dysfunction for both men and women. The results show that CSA is common in the Australian population and contributes to impairment in the sexual functioning of adults, particularly women.

**A very normal family.** Ford, J. (2005). Charnwood, ACT: Ginninderra Press.

In this personal account, an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse describes her experience of abuse and subsequent efforts to overcome the trauma she suffered.

## Child-friendly communities

**Building child friendly communities.** Smart, F. (2005). *Rattler*, 76, 17–19.

The Child Friendly Challenge, which encourages all Australians to help ease the stress of a parent or carer and make a difference to a child, was developed in response to the national rise in child abuse cases. This article discusses the benefits of child-friendly communities and how they can be created.

## Child prostitution

**Victimisation among those involved in underage commercial sexual activity.** Saphira, M., & Herbert, A. (2005). *Women's Studies Journal*, 19(2), 32–40.

This study, conducted in New Zealand, examines rates and experiences of childhood sexual abuse and violence in people who were underage when they began working in the sex industry. It looks at incidents involving verbal abuse and physical assault, places where sexual assault occurred, and the relationship between current sexual assault associated with sex for money and prior childhood sexual abuse.

## Child removal

**Christmas without the kids: Losing children through the child protection system.** O'Neill, C. (2005). *Children Australia*, 30(4), 11–18.

Longitudinal research in Victoria is exploring the experience and support needs of birth parents and grandparents, children, permanent parents, teachers, social workers and therapists in situations where children

have been permanently removed from their birth families by the child protection system. The research is now halfway through its second three-year phase. This paper details the findings for ten birth parents, most of whom have been involved in the study for at least three years. The findings are presented through themes of loss, roles, boundaries, power and support. The research provides clues as to how professionals can offer support to these parents. What the parents want is little enough—for their stories to be heard without blame; to be consulted about their children's future; and to be offered the possibility of meeting up with parents who have similar experiences.

## Community education

**Play your part: Protect our children.** Australian Childhood Foundation & Monash University. (2004). National Centre for the Prevention of Child Abuse, Ringwood, Vic.: Australian Childhood Foundation.

The effects of child abuse on children, families and society are explored in this booklet. It presents facts about child abuse, definitions of various types of abuse, and why child abuse happens. The booklet also looks at the impact of child abuse, the responsibility of everyone to participate in child protection, ways to listen to and believe children, how to recognise the signs of child abuse, what to do if you suspect child abuse is occurring, and reporting child abuse.

## Counselling

**Responding to sexual violence: Responding to sexual assault and abuse.** The Sexual Assault Resource Centre. (2005). Perth, WA: Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

This DVD depicts three counselling sessions, involving an adolescent girl who has been sexually assaulted, a woman who was sexually abused as a child, and a woman who has been sexually assaulted and is preparing for a medical and forensic examination. The video demonstrates general counselling skills; responding to disclosures of sexual assault and child sexual abuse; raising and assessing links between sexual abuse, assault, mental health and alcohol and drug problems; and strategies to manage dissociation and self-harming behaviour. Training notes with key questions and issues for discussion accompany the video.

**Responding to sexual violence: Working with Aboriginal adolescents and adults.** The Sexual Assault Resource Centre. (2005). Perth, WA: Sexual Assault Resource Centre.

This DVD depicts two counselling sessions, one with an adolescent Aboriginal girl who has experienced sexual abuse; the second with an Aboriginal woman who experienced sexual abuse as a child. The video demonstrates general counselling skills, working within a cultural context, and responding to disclosures of sexual assault and child sexual abuse. Training notes with key questions and issues for discussion accompany the video.

## Cross-cultural differences

**Culture and child protection: Reflexive responses.** Connolly, M., Crichton-Hill, Y., & Ward, T. (2006). London, England: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

How does cultural thinking influence the practice of social workers, policy-makers and academics? This book describes a culturally sensitive model of child protection practice. It discusses culture, the client and the practitioner in child protection work; culturally reflexive responses in abuse work; ethnic culture, child protection and the professional environment; childhood cultures, care and protection; family cultures and protecting children; cultures of risk, offending and good lives; and culturally reflexive theory and practice in child protection.

## Early intervention

**The Columbus pilot in the Family Court of Western Australia.** Pike, L. T., & Murphy, P. T. (2006). *Family Court Review*, 44(2), 270–286.

The Columbus pilot project operated in the Family Court of Western Australia during 2001 and 2002. The early intervention program targeted separated parents and their children in cases involving domestic violence or child abuse, and helped them avoid lengthy family court litigation. This article describes the development of the Columbus pilot, the Columbus process, demographic characteristics of people who participated in the project, and the evaluation methodology and results. It discusses improved outcomes for clients.

## Family structure

**The relationship between childhood injuries and family type.** Richardson, N. et al. (2005). *Family Matters*, 72, 44–49.

Using data on the 4–5-year-old children participating in *Growing Up in Australia: the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children*, this examination of the relationship between family structure and incidence of child injury indicates that children in sole-parent families, but not in stepfamilies, were over-represented among the 17 per cent of children who sustained an injury. Although children living in sole-parent and stepfamilies have a slightly higher injury rate than those in intact families, this slightly higher injury risk could be fully explained by the higher levels of socio-economic disadvantage in sole-parent households. It is likely that any higher risk for child injury in non-intact families occurs because such families are more likely to possess child, parent, family and neighbourhood characteristics that are risk factors for child injury, rather than being specific to family type itself.

## Female perpetrators

**Commentary: Women's violence to children.** Ritchie, J. (2005). *Women's Studies Journal*, 19(2), 131–136.

Rates and types of violence against children by women are explored in this article. The article also looks at social

attitudes towards women who are violent towards their children or kill their children, and judicial sentencing of these women. It considers links between domestic violence by men and subsequent violence against children by women.

## Indigenous children

**Through young black eyes: A handbook to protect Indigenous children from the impact of family violence and child abuse—2005 update.** Bedford, K., & Moloney, M. (2005). North Fitzroy, Vic.: Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over-represented in child protection cases and are much more likely to be removed from their families than other Australian children. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care has produced this handbook to assist families and communities to prevent family violence, child abuse and neglect, and to respond effectively where violence, abuse and neglect may have occurred. The underlying systemic causes of child abuse and neglect need to be dealt with, as opposed to simply removing children where they are at risk or have been the victims of abuse or neglect. This publication is divided into the following sections: family violence; child abuse and neglect; child sexual assault; reporting child protection matters; and a directory of services and resource information.

## Intellectually disabled parents

**Intellectual disability and parenting.** Mildon, R., Wade, C., & Matthews, J. (2006). *Every Child*, 12(1), 12–13.

Parents with an intellectual disability are over-represented in child protection services and care proceedings. This article discusses three factors that may contribute to this trend: assumptions people have about disability; high levels of disadvantage faced by these families; and gaps in effective services, support and resources for these families. The article considers the benefits of providing parent skills education in conjunction with other family-focused support.

## Internet child abuse

**Queensland police stings in online chat rooms.** Krone, T. (2005). Canberra, ACT: Australian Institute of Criminology.

Between June 2003 and September 2004, the Queensland police service conducted 25 investigations into predatory behaviour by men seeking sex with children through online chat rooms. This paper provides an overview of the legislation under which these offences against children can be prosecuted, and particularly the relevant Queensland legislation. It reports on the Queensland police investigations and discusses two successful prosecutions.

## Law reform

**A comparative examination of forensic disadvantage directions in delayed prosecutions of childhood sexual abuse.** Lewis, P. (2005). *Criminal Law Journal*, 29(5), 281–295.

In delayed prosecutions of childhood sexual abuse, the jury is warned that the delay has caused the defendant to suffer forensic disadvantage. This article explains the Longman warning, used in Australia, which argues that by reason of delay it would be dangerous to convict on the uncorroborated evidence of the complainant alone. The English courts have developed a new jurisprudence, a warning triggered by a showing of prejudice by the defendant as a result of the delay. The article compares these approaches and considers which best protects the rights of the defendant. It also explores whether forensic disadvantage or prejudice should be presumed at all, and presents a third option: a more flexible warning that there may be forensic disadvantage or prejudice where there is evidence to that effect.

## Resilience

**Resilience in children, families, and communities: Linking context to practice and policy.** Peters, R. DeV., Leadbeater, B., & McMahon, R. J. (Eds.). (2005). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.

This volume begins with an overview of resilience research, from the past to the present and into the future. Resilience is then examined in individual, family and community contexts. From school-based programs for pregnant teenagers, and community-based child abuse interventions, to the social transformation of environments and neighborhoods, this volume presents a varied, interesting and challenging array of resilience research and practice.

## Research

**National audit of Australian child protection research, 1995–2004.** Higgins, D. J. et al. (2005). Melbourne, Vic.: National Child Protection Clearinghouse, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

This audit covers Australian research conducted in the last decade on prevention, identification and responses to child abuse and neglect. The audit examines the following areas: number of research projects examining each type of abuse or neglect; number of projects addressing different topics; changes in the focus between 1995 and 2004; geographic breakdown of location of research; types of organisations conducting research; level of funding; type of funding agencies; whether research was part of a degree program; discipline area; sample type; sample size; number of projects that had ethics approvals; multiple site projects; frequency of different publication types; projects addressing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander issues; findings from research on statutory child protection services, prevention, intervention programs, risk factors, incidence, methodological issues, and

research and design trends; implications for policy and practice; implications for research; and dissemination.

## Therapy

**Working with traumatized youth in child welfare.** Boyd Webb, N. (Ed.). (2006). New York: Guilford Press.

This book integrates child protection and developmental psychopathology literature to assist therapists working with maltreated children and their families. It explains the impact of trauma and maltreatment on the developing brain and the implications for therapy, as well as discussing specific therapies, services and patient groups, such as teenage mothers, disabled children, assessment, family violence, and foster care placements.

## Worker attitudes

**How can a strengths approach increase safety in a child protection context?.** O'Neil, D. (2005). *Children Australia*, 30(4), 28–32.

Child protection is one of the most difficult fields for social welfare professionals to work within. Being an enabler on one hand and an agent of social control on the other can create a dichotomy that leaves practitioners feeling like they need a different set of skills to do each component. Maybe a strengths approach framework can provide the link between the two. A strengths approach is greater than a set of strengths-based tools. It is a way of conceptualising the organisation and delivery of child protection services. This article expresses the current views of a practitioner with 37 years experience in the child and family welfare field. (Journal abstract)

**Social inequality, 'the deviant parent' and child protection practice.** McConnell, D., & Llewellyn, G. (2005). *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 40(4), 553–566.

Child protection cases typically involve families struggling through socio-economic hardship. That said, in child protection practice there is a readiness to see the parent as the problem, with parent reform or child removal as the preferred remedy. In this paper, the emergence and ongoing legitimacy of this child protection response is traced to the de-politicisation of social inequality. (Journal abstract)

## Worker stress

**Functional families: Functional teams.** Boland, C. (2006). *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Family Therapy*, 27(1), 22–28.

This article highlights the negative effects on professionals who regularly work with very abusive families, and seeks to identify what protective factors in the work team and its management mitigate these effects. The author compares behavioural consequences of living in a dysfunctional family with the consequences of working in a dysfunctional team. She aims to identify practical, realistic things that can be done, especially by team managers, to protect staff from the all-too-familiar emotional costs of such work. (Journal abstract)