



# Following World Trends in Child Care

by Ken Jaffe

**T**here are been exciting developments in the past few months regarding the expansion, quality enhancement, and identification of effective models around the world. Several countries which have already made substantial progress in developing innovative child care strategies are in the process of refining and broadening their programs. Some countries and regions with notable refinements include:

## **Australia: Queensland**

The state of Queensland has shown innovation and ingenuity in developing a variety of new systems to deal with the expansion and improvement of child care. Recently, the government has announced a three year plan to increase and improve child care centers in the state — with \$10.7 million over the next three years in general improvement funds, along with more than \$4.35 million in funds to establish 40 multipurpose children's centers in rural areas to better meet the needs of country families. The initiative has also called for the establishment of up to 400 "outside school hours care" services through-

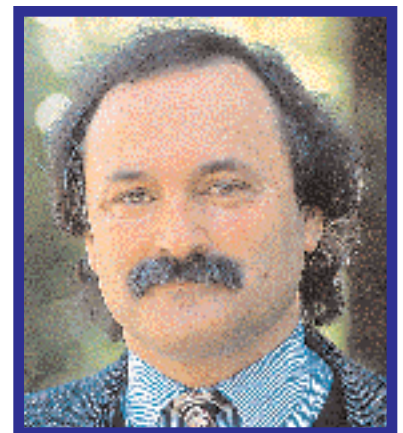
out Queensland to be boosted by extra funds of over \$6 million. This effort will mean better facilities for primary school-aged children before and after school and during holidays.

Queensland has also developed a statewide Community Info-Net system for, among other things, child care information and referral. Parents can log into a computer system which will help them to locate a variety of child care services which best meet their needs. These services are listed for children from birth through 15 years of age and include information on everything from full day center care to "casual" center care (drop-in care), as well as work-related evening

care, care for children of rotating shift workers, and more.

Also in Australia, the large Holmsglen Vocational Center has established child care connections including on-site care at several of its vocational training sites. The child care services are available to those in the 30,000 student population who need care while they are in classes or training.

Australia has long had a system, primarily through municipal governments, of occasional care (back-up or drop-in care), as well as networks of family day care providers set up into "schemes" (systems) where parents can call a central number, usually through a city or regional office, to be referred to private family day care providers in the area. The occasional care centers, in certain communities, have been built specifically for the



*The International Child Resource Institute is a non profit consulting and project development organization working to initiate or improve children's programs around the world. Ken Jaffe, MA, JD, the executive director of ICRI, has been a consultant to more than 300 child care programs worldwide.*

purpose of taking in children when parents are between regular child care arrangements, in need of temporary care, or for emergency care.

## The Netherlands

As a country where women have entered the work force in lower numbers and at a slower pace than in any other area of Europe, Dutch child care has had a more recent history and slower but nonetheless exciting developments over the past ten years.

According to the Netherlands Institute for Child Welfare, the basis of Dutch family structure and government policy was oriented toward assuring that families could exist on one income, augmented by certain government subsidies. More recently, however, an increasing number of women who head single-parent households need to work to support their children. As a result, a large group of women have entered or remain in the labor market, thus creating a need for expanded child care opportunities. Since 1990, the Child Care Incentive Scheme allowed funds that previously went to parents for tax relief to be divided among the local governments to improve child care facilities. Between 1990 and 1993, central government funding for child care increased from 145 million to 260 million Dutch Guilders.

This expansion continues to this day in a variety of forms. The capacity of child care increased from 20,000 places in 200 municipalities in 1990 to 70,000 places in over 600 municipalities by 1993. At the same time, staffing for child care more than doubled. At the present time, there are over 100,000 children making use of the various forms of child care. It is notable that one-third of the newly created capacity in the provision of day care is rented to employers who offer child care facilities to their employees. This public/private cooperation and the recognition that employers should take part of the responsibility for assuring that quality child care is available to the children of Dutch employees has been at the heart of an innovative system.

Child care quality improvement in the Netherlands has now become a major issue. Based upon the revised Social Welfare Act, the field of day care is developing its own system of quality care and quality protection through 1999. Until that time, several quality standards are prescribed by central and local governments.

From ICRI-Europe, with an office in the Netherlands, the latest word is that with the upcoming elections the continued expansion and quality improvement in child care will remain a very high priority.

## Sweden

As we reported in the November / December issue of *Child Care Information Exchange*, the Swedes have conducted diverse experiments in integrating school-aged child care programs with elementary schools. This approach has now become part of the national policy of the country. With the shift of national child care administration from the Department of Social Services to the national Department of Education, programs of this type can now be administered more effectively.

More and more fully integrated child care and school-aged approaches will be established. The research and model development at Gothenberg University and in the community of Skovde, which has been previously discussed, is now moving to the national level. The refinement of a structure whereby elementary school teachers and school-aged child care providers work hand in hand at planning for and implementing a full day of stimulating and nurturing activities and programs for primary school children continues.

## Two Important Opportunities to Understand Worldwide Child Care Models

Child care professionals and policy makers will have a unique opportunity during 1998/99 to experience and understand the latest child care mod-

els and policy directions through two major conferences.

**State of the World Forum.** In November 1998, in San Francisco, the prestigious State of the World Forum will devote a major section of their conference to work-family issues under the title *Creating a World That Works for Our Children: A Global Look at Work-Family Model Programs and Policies*. This forum, which has previously hosted such notable individuals as Marian Wright Edelman, Jane Goodall, Desmond Tutu, and other world leaders, provides an opportunity to understand key child care and family and children's issues and hear from child care leaders from around the world. The focus of these sessions will be on policy development and long-term planning strategies to integrate effective child care models into various settings.

**World Forum on Early Care and Education.** Another exciting conference with a different emphasis will be held April 6-9, 1999, in Honolulu, Hawaii. Sponsored by *Child Care Information Exchange* with collaboration from numerous world child care leaders, the conference will emphasize a hands-on approach to understanding child care models and adapting those "best practices" for use at the local level. The conference will feature presentations from key child care providers and program developers who have had firsthand experience in implementing their models within their own country or region.

ICRI is involved in the development of both of these conferences and welcomes your participation and input. You can reach us by:

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