

IYC — INVOLVEMENT OF KIDS A KEY FEATURE

Report from the IYC National Committee of NGO's

The United Nations has called on the Governments of the world to increase budgetary provisions for programs benefiting children or to revise present priorities in order to consolidate and build on the results of the International Year of the Child, which officially finishes at the end of this month.

Australian Representative, Mr H.D. Anderson, at the United Nations thirty fourth General Assembly, said during the IYC debate: "IYC has surpassed all expectations reaching across national boundaries.

"Australia has sought to continue action initiated in the Year by funding projects from the normal Budget rather than a special allocation and sees considerable value in proposals for the exchange of child-related research between developed and developing countries and periodic reporting on national activities after IYC.

"Planning for follow-up of the Year should aim for prevention as well as cure," Mr Anderson said.

During the debate the United Nations General Assembly also called on the non-Government organisations to continue and expand their programs for children to maintain the momentum generated by the Year.

The Executive Director of the Australian IYC National Committee of NGOs, Mrs Helen L'Orange, summarised the events and projects of the Year by saying: "In Australia a key feature of the observance of IYC has been the degree of participation by and consultation with children.

"States, Territories and many of the hundreds of local IYC Committees established Kids' Councils and the children were consulted on a wide range of issues.

"For instance, the children considered corporal punishment in schools very responsibly, and the children's interest has prompted adult bodies representing them to press for the abandonment of the use of corporal punishment in the Australian Education System."

Mrs L'Orange went on to give more examples of projects carried out in Australia during the Year. These include the IYC National Committee of NGOs' "Consult with Kids", a guidebook for adult leaders of children's groups.

A National Consultation has been conducted throughout Australia. At the Governor-General's Children's Conference in December the children put questions arising from their group discussions to Ministers responsible for IYC Australia-wide.

"Many organisations and Government Departments who had previously not been involved with children have focussed on children and conducted special programs during IYC, and in many instances these special programs have become on-going," Mrs L'Orange said.



"The New South Wales Planning and Environment Commission is working on the need for children's impact statements, for example, on construction projects such as housing estates."

FUNDS FOR PREVENTIVE BLINDNESS

As part of the theme of Kids Caring for Kids the UNICEF Committee of Australia conducted a fundraising program throughout Australian schools to raise money for preventive blindness in third world countries.

As the result of the efforts of IYC, a South Australian author has been given a grant by the Federal Office of Child Care to develop two "Child-to-Child" books aimed at stimulating children to develop their ways of relating with each other, working with each other and helping each other.

KNEE HIGH SHOW

"Adults too have been reminded of what it is like to be a child," she said. "In Western Australia the Knee-High Show was staged at Perth's International Expo."

It was visited by 30,000 people who saw six major parts of the child's world presented in scaled-up versions.

Referring to the participation of the media, Mrs L'Orange noted that the "Care for Kids" song has sold 64,500 to date and that "Careline" on NSW radio station 2UE has proved a great success. This project, which provides access to expert counselling services by 2UE, will continue next year.

COMMUNITY ACTIVITY CARDS

The Australia Council produced for the Year a series of community activity cards involving children. The Council's book "Our World", with contributions from children throughout Australia, is another on-going project.

The 27-member IYC National Committee of NGOs in February resolved that "the highest priority for the Year be given to the devising and implementing of an on-going national program to bring the well-being of Aboriginal children up to the same level as other children in Australia." An action plan entitled "Aboriginal Children in Crisis" has been prepared and the National Committee has commenced the implementation of this.

The IYC National Committee of NGOs also wrote to Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kurt Waldheim, calling for "Governments with nuclear weapons to abandon this international crime against humanity and free the billions of dollars now used for monstrous weapons to feed, house and educate the world's children."

A monograph series "IYC Issues", published by the IYC National Committee of NGOs, has excited great interest in issues related to children not only in Australia but internationally. Some subject areas covered were Development Education, the Disadvantaged Child, the Arms Race and the Child.

The IYC National Committee of NGOs conducted a legislative review of new and proposed legislation affecting children throughout Australia. The Committee has pressed for the establishment of a working party to consult with all levels of Government and the community in the formation of a National Policy for Children and Families.

The Committee has also been pressing for an on-going mechanism to be established to continue the work of IYC. Proposals for an on-going mechanism are being considered and recommendations are currently being prepared for the State/Commonwealth Ministers to consider at their meeting at the end of March, 1980.

