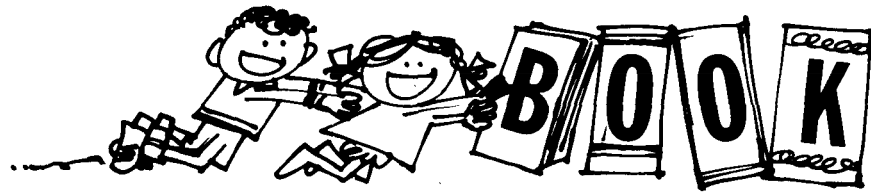


**Book Review Editor
Ruth Stewart**



ON THE SIDE OF THE CHILD

Author: Peter Boss.
Publishers: Fontana/Collins,
Melbourne, 1980.
Price: \$4.95. 166 pages.

With this small book, which contains a remarkable amount of information and a wide range of Australian source material, Peter Boss has unerringly filled what was once a wide void on the Australian scene — a comprehensive and objective account of the States' various approaches to the problem of child abuse over recent years.

The pressing need for such a book must have assured it a warm welcome — it must be required reading in most social work courses at least. The void was predictable — those who work in the field of child protection are unlikely to have the energy or the capacity to free themselves easily from the historical and structural context of their work places to produce such a detailed overview. The author's early background of social work in the child care field gives him a valid and useful passport to these realms; his current academic status lends distance and objectivity in what could be a sensitive area.

The accounts of the various States' programmes are carefully descriptive and factual, relying to a considerable extent on material and information furnished by the programmes themselves. While this approach does not encourage critical analysis, some would suggest it may have performed indirectly a more useful service to Australian children by providing a first national perspective, and letting readers judge for themselves.

The book will help and encourage workers in child protective services to work out their own place in the scheme of things and some new directions, and will illuminate for other professions some of the dark corners and seeming inconsistencies in this new and growing field.

The author uses case presentations to enliven and illustrate the widening parameters of child abuse today, and later links these to social theory and social policy. He traces developments in service responses throughout Australia, but regrettably omits giving some attention to the efforts made in some country areas or to the special problems of developing services in these communities. The book speculates on incidence, examines dilemmas in policies and programmes and discusses treatment, prediction and prevention and mandatory reporting of child abuse.

This book is our first look back at how we are doing. On the international scene it will provide a useful backdrop against which to project the small but growing amount of Australian published material on child abuse.

It is timely also, appearing just before the Second National Australasian Conference on Child Abuse, held in Brisbane in September, 1981, where social workers, health professionals, psychologists, lawyers and others look at the inevitability of more stated practice in this most challenging of fields.

"On the Side of the Child", in content and in price, is good value.

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NURSERIES NOW—A fair deal for Parents and Children by Martin Hughes, Berry Mayall, Peter Moss, Jane Perry, Pat Petrie and Gill Pinkerton. 284 pages. Pelican Books, England, 1980 \$4.95

"Nurseries Now" combines a consumer's guide to what nurseries (also known as creches and day care centres) are available in the U.K. with a sensible critique of the gaps, anomalies and divisions in the present system of pre-school services.

While the consumer's guide will not help Australians seeking places in day care or other pre-school services, most of the book is extremely interesting and locally relevant and provides an excellent framework for examining our own services more critically.

The six authors are teachers, psychologists and researchers in the area of pre-school education. The fact that four of the six are also parents shines through the entire book very clearly. They show remarkable insight into the realities of caring for young children while at the same time exploring carefully the vitally important wider issues affecting child care in society today.

Nurseries Now draws on many sources—mothers' views, recent research, international comparisons and examples of day care centres where parents and staff are trying out new approaches. The authors emphasise the importance of setting standards of high quality day care, co-ordination and integration of all pre-school services, equal work opportunities for parents, more humane and imaginative paternity, maternity and sick leave provisions, greater choice and involvement of parents in child care, greater involvement of men in their children's upbringing and a special emphasis on political and economic factors affecting child care.

Popular myths about child care are