

*JULIE BATURYNSKY describes the work of the Cottage Family Care Centre which provides a special service for families with children aged 0–5 years caught in the generational cycle of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect.*

## Working with the whole family

**E**stablished in 1981, the Cottage Family Care Centre is a community-based program servicing the City of Campbelltown local government area in Sydney. The Cottage is sponsored by the Uniting Church of Campbelltown and is funded primarily by the Department of Community Services, and community donations. Multidisciplinary professional staff are complemented by volunteers.

The Cottage Family Care Centre provides a special service for families with children aged 0–5 years caught in the generational cycle of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and/or neglect. During the past year The Cottage has worked with approximately one hundred children and babies. All the children enrolled in the child care program are notified/registered children 'at risk' and have been referred to the program by District Officers, Paediatricians, Community Nurses and other agencies.

The Cottage works with the whole family – child abuse and neglect is a family program and is generational. Intervention and treatment for the parent and the child is provided through the Child Care and Parent Program.

Four aspects of child abuse and/or neglect have to be acknowledged:

- the abuse and neglect itself;
- the impact of abuse and neglect upon the child;
- the family's inability to provide adequate care and protection for the child; and
- the degree and extent of parental un-availability.

In working with the children, the Cottage Family Care Centre provides:

- an environment that is safe, caring, trusting, consistent and predictable;
- individual attention;
- individual therapy both for developmental delays and emotional problems;
- help to develop a positive self-concept and self-esteem within the children; and



*The Cottage Family Care Centre recently won a National Child Abuse Prevention Award.*

- help to identify and express their feelings appropriately.

The Cottage Program helps the child work through the trauma of abuse to overcome problems. Work with parents aims to increase parents' sensitivity and emotional responsiveness to their child, and to help improve the degree to which they can meet their child's needs.

The goal is to help parents relinquish an abusive, neglectful pattern of child rearing, and replace it with a method of care which is more rewarding to the parents and at the same time conducive to the optimal development of the child. The Parent Program tries to reopen the channels of growth and development for parents to help them get beyond their limitations and the hampering residual liabilities of their own early lives.

The necessary components for growth of the parents are:

- building self-esteem;
- developing better basic trust and confidence;
- developing ways to make contact with other people in the family neighbourhood and community; and
- developing a support network.

The Cottage Family Care Centre is committed to provide intervention, support and care to all its families.

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