



University of South Australia



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Sowing the Seeds of Innovation in Child Protection

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Australian Centre for Child Protection



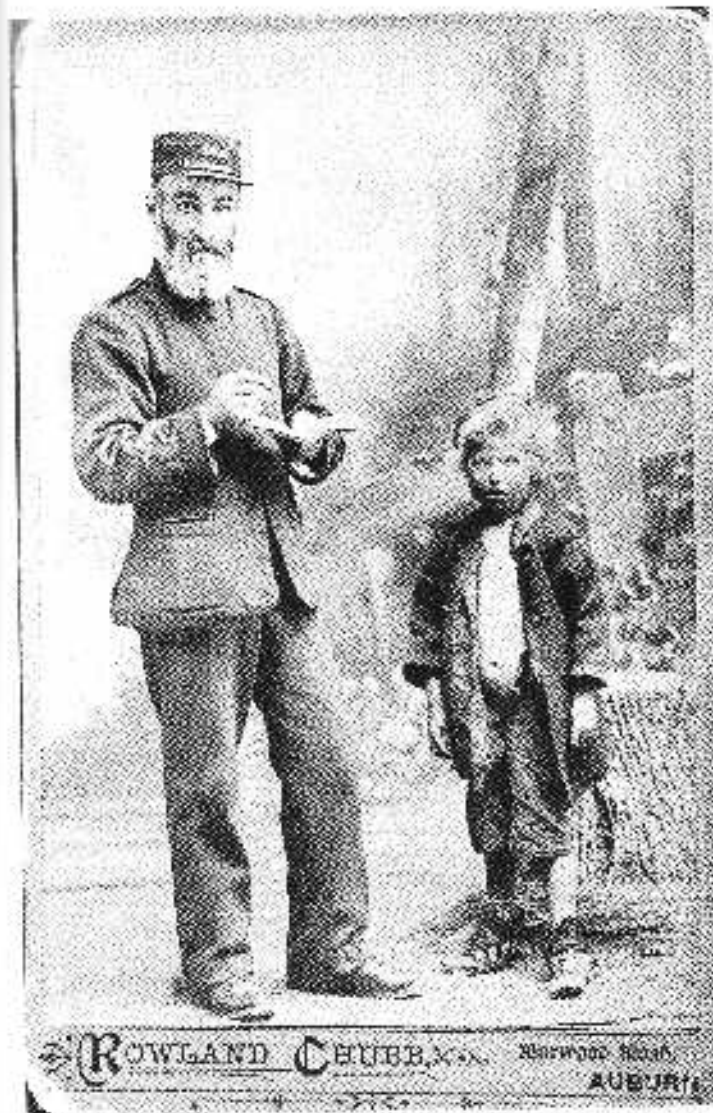
To turn with the tide ...

- **Understand how the past shapes present policies**
- **Implement a public health model**
- **Translate research into policy and practice**
- **Transplant successful innovations**



Understand how the past shapes present policies

- **The First Wave of the Child Protection Movement**
- **The Second Wave of the Child Protection Movement**



2 The first publicly distributed photograph used by the Victorian Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Inspector William North and Leontine.



“The Battered Baby Syndrome”

- **Birrell R, Birrell, J. The maltreatment syndrome in children: a hospital study. Med J Aust 1966;2:**
- **Bialestock D. Neglected babies: a study of 289 babies admitted consecutively to a reception centre. Med J Aust 1966; 2:**



Continuing Historical Currents

- **The notion of the child as a holder of human rights**
- **The notion of the child as a psychological being**



An overloaded system is dangerous for:

- **Children at high risk**
- **Children at some risk**
- **Children at little risk**
- **Children already in care**
- **Other parts of service system**
- **Those who work in the system**



A Public Health Model

- **Population-based**
- **Whole-of-government**
- **Strategies such as**
 - **strengthening the child protection “primary care system”**
 - **strengthening adult D&A, mental health services to be child-centred**



Translate research into policy and practice

Reflections on the application of Bowlby's research:

- Example of policy resistance
- Example of practice success

What might this tell us?



Practitioner Factors (Greenhalgh et al, 2004)

- links between researchers and practitioners
- participation in post graduate study
- practitioner involvement in research
- support from colleagues
- autonomy
- practicality
- ease of use or 'effort'
- conformity with status quo



Organisational Factors

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Organisation's Absorptive capacity:

- existing knowledge and skills base
- related technology
- 'learning organization' culture
- proactive leadership focused on sharing new knowledge



Greenhalgh et al (2004) continued:

Organisation's Receptive Context for Change:

- strong leadership
- clear strategic vision
- good managerial relations
- visionary staff in pivotal positions
- climate conducive to risk taking
- effective data capture systems



Lisbeth Schorr (2003)

“..it is the very nature of the most promising responses to persistent social problems that makes them almost impossible to evaluate by the methodologically elegant ways in which we evaluate drugs or electric toothbrushes.”



Pathways Mapping Initiative (PMI)

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“We convene groups of highly knowledgeable, experienced individuals, including researchers and practitioners, who are steeped in their respective fields but diverse in perspectives and beliefs. We ask them to draw on their accumulated wisdom to make explicit their ‘mental maps’ of what works to reach the outcome under consideration.”

(Schorr, 2003)



Donald Schon, 1983

“In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground, where practitioners can make effective use of research-based theory and techniques, and there is a swampy lowland where the situations are confusing ‘messes’ incapable of technical solution. The difficulty is that the problems of the high ground, however, great their technical interest, are often relatively unimportant to clients or the larger society while in the swamp are the problems of greatest human concern.”



Transplant successful innovations

“The challenge is to promote uptake of innovations that have been shown to be effective, to delay spread of those that have not yet been shown to be effective, and to prevent uptake of ineffective innovations.”

(Haines & Donald, 2002, p.4)



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Sowing the seeds of innovation...

- **Innovation**
- **Evaluation**
- **Dissemination**
- **Transplantation**



Innovation

Find the seed of innovation that addresses a key issue and nurture it in good soil - committed, skilled people in a strong organization willing to be a mentor in helping others to learn from their work if it proves successful.



Evaluation

Assess which innovations may be worthy of “going to scale”:

- effectiveness?**
- efficiency?**
- transferability?**
- sustainability?**



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Dissemination

If an innovative approach meets these evaluation criteria, then it needs to be disseminated in ways that communicate effectively with a range of stakeholders.



Transplantation

Transfer of innovation needs to be done rigorously, maintaining the core elements of the innovation while systematically modifying it to embed it in different soils and climate in a sustainable way.



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Hope

“Institutions of hope refer to sets of rules, norms and practices that ensure that we have some room not only to dream of the extraordinary but also to do the extraordinary.”

(Braithwaite, 2004)



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**Stephen Nona,
age 12**