

(f) Working conditions for all relief staff should be clarified and widely known.

TABLE 1

Analysis of Referrals

83 recorded referrals were analysed.

Family Structure

- Married = 54%
- Single = 13%
- Widowed = 20% (nearly all elderly women)
- With Children = 46%

Assessment already completed by FRAO = 55% (possibly not all recorded)

Income

- Age Pension 25%*
- Invalid Pension 4%*
- Unemployment Benefit 5%*
- Supporting Parent Benefit 8%*
- Special Benefit 1%*
- Nil, i.e. lost due to flood 5%**

* Possibly not all recorded

** all self-employed

- (i) Nearly half of families seen were in employment, and were not the usual clients of welfare agencies.
- (ii) 25 people from 15 different ethnic backgrounds were seen, and the assistance of 5 interpreters were needed.

TABLE 2

Reason for Referral

(broadly defined categories)

- emotional upset, needing counselling, incl. stress, grief, loss 63%
- possible psychiatric disturbance (present or induced) 4%
- health problems 31%
- social isolation 13%
- material issues/needs 13%
- legal issues/needs 2%
- housing issues/needs 14%
- financial issues/needs (e.g. incl. Dept. Social Security) 20%
- marital problems 4%
- family problems (incl. child-at-risk) 2%
- drug/alcohol problems (present or induced) 4%
- insurance issues/needs/problems 2%
- small business loans 5%

Many referrals had more than 1 problem area.

TABLE 3

Referrals Out

(to other agencies, by PSW's)

- Ethnic Health Workers 6%
- YACS 5%
- Community Health 33%
- Dept. Social Security 7%
- Legal Advice 1%
- Drug & Alcohol Services 4%
- Community Agencies (e.g. Home Care) 16%
- Ethnic Community Groups 2%

Referred to PSW by FRAO = 67%

BOOK REVIEW

"WHEN DISASTER STRIKES"

by Beverley Raphael

A handbook for the Caring Professions.

Hutchinson 1986. Distributed by Heinemann Educational Australia.

Reviewer: Kerry Gartland

Disaster - For most people, this word conjures up images of destruction and devastation, ravaged bushland, the ruins of homes and farms, all depicted so vividly in the media.

Tangible losses can be easily tabulated, but what of the intangibles, the human cost.

It is the social and emotional realities of disaster to which Professor Beverley Raphael directs her attention in her latest book, "When Disaster Strikes". This is an excellent work, a powerful and impressive contribution to our understanding of what it is that happens to individuals and families within disaster-affected communities and to those who provide them with care and support. Professor Raphael sees disasters as events of high risk emotionally, with major implications in the provision of psychological and health services. Her suggestion that these services need to be linked in with locally-based networks and structures reflects a changing emphasis within disaster management that an affected community has a decisive role to play in managing its own recovery.

The nature of the disaster experience and the impact on those involved are clearly delineated. Numerous examples bring into sharp focus the pain, anguish and disruption that are the legacies of disaster.

"I dreamt of my home and my husband and all I had known and loved, and they were gone . . . some forever".

The *Canberra Times* (19th March 1971) gives an example of drought effects:

"Wool prices have crashed, graziers are deep in debt, and re-stocking is a financial impossibility for many of them. Outback towns are dotted with empty houses and shops; men who once worked on stations have gone to seek jobs in the cities. Even some of the station-owners have left their properties to seek work."

The resolution of problems in all these areas (i.e. post-disaster management) will demand great flexibility in a situation which is likely to be extremely dynamic.

"Report of Proceedings, Post Disaster Management Seminar", November 1981, Australian Counter Disaster College, P6.

"Will the wind come back again, Mommy? Will it? Will it?"

The importance of maintaining family and social cohesion is stressed, along with reinforcement of support and self-help networks. Also highlighted is the critical need to set up substantive support structures for emergency workers and for those involved in recovery activities in the following weeks and months.

Perhaps an area of interest for further studies could be an exploration of the link between individual and community recovery. This may well be outside Professor Raphael's focus of concern, but there are important implications to disaster planning and management within a community development framework.

Professor Raphael has drawn directly from her own considerable experience dating back to the Darwin cyclone and the Granville rail disaster. She has an impressive list of credentials, and is unique in her joint appointment as Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Queensland, and Director of Psychiatry at the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

"When Disaster Strikes" is a comprehensive and well-documented book which will undoubtedly be of assistance to both professional and voluntary disaster workers, and it is firmly based on the Australian experience.

It will broaden understanding of the effects of the disaster experience for those who have suffered loss, and will be of great interest to all who want to know how people and communities cope with such situations. As Professor Raphael notes in the preface, "this book is really written as a tribute to the courage, humanity, altruism and suffering that are so much a part of the disasters of human experience".

"We are thus led to conclude that the problems that decision makers must deal with are wicked and incorrigible ones, for they defy efforts to delineate their boundaries and to identify their causes, and thus to expose their problematic nature. The decision maker who works with open systems is caught up in the ambiguity of their casual webs.

Moreover, his/her would-be solutions are confounded by a still further set of dilemmas posed by the growing pluralism of the contemporary public, whose valuations of his/her proposals are judged against an array of different and contradicting scales".

(From: Rittel H.W. and Webber M.M. "Dilemmas in a Central Theory of Planning", June 1973 Pp 155-169).