

Hamilton Parents Centre 1957-2003: A Sociological History

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together with
Hamilton Parents Centre Inc.

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Foreword & Acknowledgements

This has been an exciting and rewarding research project. The scope and depth of the activities and accomplishments of Hamilton Parents Centre and its people, and the changes it has helped to effect, have at times astonished the fieldwork and archives researchers (Blair Morgans and Holly Snape) while providing a unique opportunity to remember and reflect on an important activity of earlier years for the old identity (David Swain). The research and especially the writing tasks have been challenging, as the archive material proved a rich lode of information from which the nuggets had to be selected, while the interviews gave us some very personal remembrances and reflections from which a representative selection had to be chosen and faithfully communicated. Together the archive material and the interviews, informed by our sociological perspective, made possible the identification and selection of the themes which are the basis of this report.

The researchers would like to express their sincere thanks to the many people who have participated either directly or indirectly in this project. It has been a privilege to be given the opportunity to research and write about a community organisation that has had such an ongoing and positive impact on the local community for nearly half a century.

We would like firstly to acknowledge the Hamilton Parents Centre Sociological History Consultative Committee which comprised both past and present members, and in particular Rosemary Ryan who managed the project from the Hamilton Parents Centre end, made a broad range of material available and co-ordinated contacts with research participants such as the Current Members' Focus Group. Another member of this Committee, Judy Pickard also agreed to be a research participant. Judy's recollections of her experiences with the Hamilton Parents Centre cause were an invaluable part of the research, and we are greatly appreciative of Judy's input. We also thank Donna Behl for being a willing interview participant and for locating and recruiting 1980s Parents Centre Committee members to take part in the Former Members' Focus Group, and Lee Wilson who suggested that while interviewing founding and early Hamilton Parents Centre activists we could and should create videotape of the main interview topics as a permanent record – which we did.

The other participants' contributions have also been invaluable. The other interviewees who participated were Elsa Wood, Fay Foreman, and Denise Irvine, to all of whom we offer our most grateful thanks for their time and input. The participants in the Former Members' Focus Group were Lynda Thompson, Donna Behl, Melinda Ormond, John Matheson, Pippa Wright, Barbara Brook and Donna McCaughan. The Current Members' Focus Group comprised Christine Troughton, Hayley Yorke, Shiree Matthews, Janelle Bailey and Simone DeGiorgio. We are grateful for the contribution of the Focus Groups' members.

The staff of the Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University deserve mention for their support and interest in this project during the time spent in the archive at the Institute by Holly Snape and Blair Morgans during January 2003. The morning teas

were fantastic. In particular we thank Helen May for allowing us access to such a precious resource and Andrea Godfrey for being the on-the-spot contact who catered to our every need. Marie Bell is another person of notable interest who we met at the Institute while doing the archival research. Marie has had a long-standing association with the Parents Centre Wellington and the Federation and is known to many of the past members with whom we have spoken. Marie was working on her PhD at the time, an oral history account of the Wellington Parents Centre. Thank you, Marie, for your time and words of wisdom. We look forward to reading your thesis in the future.

We would also like to thank the Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Waikato, for its support in allowing use of its facilities for the duration of the research. In particular Lynda Ballard and Bev Campbell have provided valuable administrative support when and where required. The audio and video recording equipment and audio transcribers used in the primary research were provided by Information Technology Services, University of Waikato. We also thank the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences for the use of meeting rooms where the interviews were conducted.

The role of the old identity on the research team (David Swain) has been multifaceted but less extensive and intensive than the primary researchers (Holly Snape and Blair Morgans). In making his contribution he has been able to draw upon numerous roles undertaken over quite a long period – initially an antenatal class member, then an antenatal education resource person, later a committee member and conference contributor, an editor of the Bulletin and the Federation Librarian, founder of the Parent Education Archive which later formed part of Helen May’s Institute, and finally “old identity” to literally a later generation of Parents Centre people. He has provided an overview which has both helped to shape the themes identified in the archive and interview material and helped to authenticate them.

There have been many people who have been involved with the Hamilton Parents Centre since its inception. Due to the size of this publication and the large number of people who have been involved in the Hamilton Parents Centre we regret that there is not space for everyone’s stories or all the names.

Blair Morgans
Holly Snape
David Swain

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Chapter One: About the “Sociological History” HPC Project

This is a “sociological history” of Hamilton Parents Centre and as such presents the stories¹ of Hamilton Parents Centre organised both chronologically and thematically. These stories are broadly of two kinds: those represented in words and pictures in the archive materials made available to us by Hamilton Parents Centre, and those shared with us this year in individual and group interviews by (mostly) women who in the past were or at present are involved with Parents Centre (and in some instances with the Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres). “Stories” sound quite simple, but these stories are rather more complex data than one might initially imagine.

The archive material does not (we believe) speak for itself: we have selected and interpreted archive material for inclusion in these accounts according to our sociological perspective and according to our points of view. These points of view have a biographical component, and also a locational element arising from our location in a city, a region and a country very different from the city and region and country which Hamilton Parents Centre occupied in the past – one which, moreover, Hamilton Parents Centre had a role in shaping. Our sense of what happened in the past – and why – may not have been the sense made of those experiences and events by the participants at the time, though where this is more or less explicit we have respected such indications of how they construed their social world.

Our key informants must also have unavoidably made selections (what they remember parallels what survived as the archive materials) and how could they avoid interpretation (how they remember the past has to be from the perspective of the present, knowing what we believe we know now about how the stories unfolded). This is not “bias”. We have regarded memories as dynamic, as including both what has survived from the time and how we now make sense of the past in light of the present. Our view as sociologists is that while there are indeed social structures which predate our existence and survive after us, and which shape and constrain us (and offer us some opportunities for real choices), we also construct our social world, create and negotiate together a shared sense of what was and what is our social world. We have heard and/or read what our key informants have said, and have then ourselves selected and interpreted their words. We have created from many stories what is our story of Hamilton Parents Centre.

The chronological account is descriptive, presenting an interwoven collation of these Hamilton Parents Centre stories both retrieved from the archives and remembered by those who were there, then, organised according to the dates of the archive materials and the dating of the key informants. The thematic account is more obviously analytical, re-presenting selected aspects of the same stories, the selections being based here on both a fairly conventional a priori sociological perspective which identifies some key features of society and its social institutions and what has emerged from analysis of the stories themselves as being or having been important – then or now – to those who have told the stories or to us as their avid listeners and readers.

This sociological history is also a case study, and we believe it is a “normal” or “typical” case². Hamilton Parents Centre can be regarded as a single entity, one of a number of such specific entities (the other Parents Centres) and more generally one of a much larger number of entities, voluntary community-based social service and advocacy organisations. It is not, however, we believe, unique. These entities, we believe, have much in common and Hamilton Parents Centre – and Hamilton itself – may properly represent this much broader category of social institutions.

We argue that Hamilton has, over the life of Hamilton Parents Centre, been reasonably representative of New Zealand communities, of urban New Zealand which is and has for a long while been the demographically predominant New Zealand. Our assertion that Hamilton over this time period is reasonably representative of New Zealand may come as a surprise to two quite different categories of readers: those who think of Hamilton past (if not present – though this view might have persisted among some) as a small conservative town and those who know that Hamilton past has been and present is remarkable for diverse and widespread innovation (and even a touch of eccentricity) – especially in the community and social services sector to which Hamilton Parents Centre belongs.

We also take the view that Hamilton Parents Centre stands for a particular kind of organisation of great importance to the history and development of the human services sector here in New Zealand: community-based, staffed largely by volunteers (but not necessarily thereby amateurs), largely self-funded, identifying new or neglected needs, developing new services, welcoming and being assisted by appropriate professionals but not unduly beholden to them, implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) criticising the status quo – but a too extensive description here of this sector would anticipate the stories we have to tell.

So what are our sources for these stories?

The records used in this project came from a wide range of sources. The Hamilton Parents Centre provided archive materials sorted and boxed by decade. These included class record books, minutes of committee and other meetings, newspaper articles, scrapbooks and posters. The Institute for Early Childhood Studies at Victoria University houses the archives and the library of the Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres and many of the documentary sources used in this project are located in this archive. These included annual reports, newsletters, correspondence, class programmes and photographs. These were all catalogued and organised thematically by the Institute archivists. Back issues of the Federation journals the *Parents Centre Bulletin*, *Parents Centre Magazine*, and *Kiwi Parent* were accessed from the School of Education Library, University of Waikato.

The key informant individual and focus group interviews were conducted to complement and extend the archival material and to gain insight into the material through past members’ remembered and shared experiences of being involved with Hamilton Parents Centre. We interviewed five key personalities from Hamilton Parents

Centre's past in a semi-structured in-depth format interview organised around themes which we developed from the archive material and our own sociological perspective while allowing the participants scope to discuss areas they thought were relevant. After receiving ethical approval for our methodology from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences we followed an informed consent process where the potential participants were sent an information sheet advising them of the scope of the research and how the researchers intended to conduct the interviews. Before each interview was conducted the researchers met with each participant for general familiarisation with that person's experiences and recollections of their involvement with Hamilton Parents Centre in order to be able to prepare for and focus the interviews appropriately. The duration of each interview was approximately one hour. The resulting audio and video recording media are to be held by Hamilton Parents Centre. These interviews were supplemented by a short (5-15 minutes) video recording where the participants specifically recorded for use in the future the story of their experiences with Hamilton Parents Centre.

Two focus groups were conducted: one was with former members who were on the Hamilton Parents Centre Committee from the mid-1980s to the late 1980s, and the other was with a group of present (2003) members, some of whom are actively involved as Committee members. The audio and video records of the interviews and focus groups were transcribed and the text was then coded into themes to be used in the analysis and writing.

Lastly (and we are not sure whether also least), we note that one of the authors of this document, David Swain, was involved with Hamilton Parents Centre and the Federation of New Zealand Parents Centre from 1968 when he and his wife Maggie Swain were expecting their first child through twenty years or more, and retained contact with the organisation from the 1990s through to the present time. Inevitably, and we would suggest beneficially when it is explicit, the analysis of the data and the text of the report reflect his recollections and reconstructions of Hamilton Parents Centre and the Federation over much of the period covered by this sociological history.

Chapter Two: A Chronological View

Hamilton Parents Centre's Beginnings

“To give advice and instruction in all matters which will be of benefit to parents and children”³ were the words used in the constitution of the Hamilton Parents Centre adopted at its inaugural meeting at the municipal Art Gallery in Hamilton on 20 March 1957. Dr Wright St-Clair chaired the meeting and “explained the part played by the Family Planning Association (Hamilton Branch) in obtaining a suitable premises to commence a Parents Centre to be run along similar lines to the Wellington Parents Centre”⁴. Mrs Eileen Littlewood was nominated for the position of President with the other positions for the executive committee being filled by Dr Blackhouse (Vice-President), Mrs Nealie (Secretary-Treasurer), Mrs Buchanan, Mrs Park, Mrs Cleave, and Miss Haggitt.⁵ Hamilton Parents Centre was officially established. A report presented to a Federation meeting in November 1957 noted Hamilton Parents Centre's beginnings:

Hamilton are making a start in a small way with 4-6 expectant mothers who started at the end of August. The physiotherapist is well known to, and liked by, the doctors. Hamilton are pursuing a conservative policy of infiltration. Meetings with the leaders of the O & G Society have proved most valuable and a good relationship exists on all sides.⁶

From these beginnings the Hamilton Parents Centre developed as an influential organisation that has also readily adapted to reflect broader societal changes. From being entirely staffed on a volunteer basis in the beginning, with the physiotherapist receiving an honorarium instead of a salary, the Hamilton Parents Centre now employs several childbirth educators to run antenatal classes and the toy librarian. These are the only paid staff with the remainder of the work being done on a voluntary basis, which as one current member commented, “is really hard” because you are “trying to find people who have the time and are passionate” about Hamilton Parents Centre.⁷

Purpose of the Parents Centre

The purpose of the Hamilton Parents Centre was and is to promote the interests of parents and their children. An important aspect of the way this was tackled in the earlier years was, inevitably, by challenging the manner in which the medical establishment dealt with expectant mothers, and thus reducing or even relieving prospective mothers' fears and anxieties about labour. This was done initially through antenatal preparation at which an alternative to the traditional model of childbirth was offered. The antenatal training provided an alternative non-medical understanding of childbirth which would include medical intervention only when necessary. Two years after Hamilton Parents Centre was established the Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres was officially ‘accepted’ as a society by the Obstetrical Council.⁸ However, despite this official approval attitudes amongst some medical professionals were slow to change.

The objectives set by Hamilton Parents Centre may be determined from documents which from the 1960s detailed their objectives by way of a statement of the Centre's core functions. These were:

To foster the appreciation by parents, the medical profession and nursing professions, and the general public, of the significance of the emotional aspects of pregnancy, childbirth and infant nurture.

To make available to expectant mothers, classes which will help them to be intellectually, physically and emotionally prepared for childbirth, so that they may be able to look forward with greater confidence to an easier and more satisfying labour, and which will also help to equip them for their role as mothers, especially in the important first years of the child's life.

To promote better family and communal mental and physical health by encouraging those practices which have beneficial effects upon early parent-child relationships, such as education for childbirth, rooming-in⁹, breastfeeding, home confinements, and permissive methods of child care.

To establish and maintain an information centre to make available to those interested literature and information on all aspects of the above aims. To give advice and instruction in all matters which will be of benefit to parents and children.

To co-operate with other organisations having similar aims.

The purposes of Parents Centre a generation or more later, around 1998, were stated in material in the new committee members' pack¹⁰. These purposes reflect what was provided to members at this period:

Childbirth education which covers the physical, emotional and psychological aspects of childbirth.

Parent support groups in the community, including postnatal [groups], exercise classes, caesarean birth support and neighbourhood playgroups. Informal support helps parents adjust to their new role.

Parent education in a wide range of topics covering parenting of toddlers, preschoolers, and primary age children.

Advocacy/lobbying for parenting, birthing and families.

The objectives have not fundamentally changed. The only significant change is that the later objectives do not specifically state that Parents Centre is fostering an appreciation of the significance of the emotional aspects of pregnancy by the medical and nursing

professions, parents and the general public. This is broadly covered in today's Federation Mission Statement which covers "[p]ositive birth experiences and informed parenting in a community where parents are supported and highly valued in their role".¹¹

Time and social change has brought an ever-widening brief for Hamilton Parents Centre. New courses have been added (see *Chapter Four: Services and Contributions to the Community*), involvement with other community groups has become both wider and stronger and as new issues involving parent/child relations arise the advocacy role must develop and change to match the changing times.

Key People

There have been many instrumental and influential people who have been involved with Hamilton Parents Centre. Eileen Littlewood was the driving force behind the inception of Hamilton Parents Centre and has been applauded as being "very influential" and "quiet but persuasive".¹² In 1954 she had shifted to Hamilton from Wellington and she remained in the city until late 1962. Eileen had heard about Parents Centre in Wellington through her involvement with Playcentre and the Family Planning Association. It was through Eileen's encouragement that the philosophy behind Parents Centre was introduced to Hamilton. At a public meeting Mrs Kar Foreman (Fay Foreman's mother) raised the possibility of establishing Hamilton's own Parents Centre, to which Eileen replied "if you can find a suitable physiotherapist ..." then Hamilton Parents Centre could begin. Mrs Kar Foreman found a physiotherapist called June Mackwell.¹³

June was the physiotherapist who was responsible for running the first antenatal classes in Eileen Littlewood's home. Judy Pickard has recalled that June "had all the right ideas".¹⁴ The words "great", "wonderful" and "marvellous" were used to describe June Mackwell during interviews with past members. June's influence extended to the Federation through her contribution on "The Role of the Physiotherapist" in the Federation *Handbook*. This detailed the altruistic nature of a professional person working in a non-profit organisation instead of a lucrative private practice. Parents Centre physiotherapists were paid an honorarium that varied by geographical location. June provided antenatal classes in Hamilton for ten years and after resigning that role remained on the Committee providing a valuable link to Hamilton Parents Centre through her work in the Campbell Johnstone Maternity Ward at Waikato Hospital.¹⁵

Elsa Wood has been another mainstay of Hamilton Parents Centre whose influences and immense contribution to Hamilton Parents Centre is widely recognised. "Elsa joined the Committee in 1960 and became President in 1962, a position she held for five years".¹⁶ Following the Presidency period Elsa was elected to the Waikato Hospital Board with the full support of Hamilton Parents Centre who campaigned for her election. In this role Elsa was instrumental in advocating the establishment of the Mothercraft Unit at Waikato Hospital. At Federation level she was appointed Co-ordinator of the Committee for the Welfare of Children in Separation, where she co-ordinated efforts nationally and made several overseas study tours. Elsa was an actively involved member of the Committee for 16 years until her resignation in 1976 and has served for many years in her present role as Patron of Hamilton Parents Centre.

Jane and James Ritchie were psychologists who had become involved with Hamilton Parents Centre after shifting from Wellington where they had been active members of the Parents Centre there. The Ritchies contributed to many areas particularly in regard to early childhood development and through Jane's involvement in La Leché League as a group leader¹⁷.

Fay Foreman was President from 1967-69 and recalls "the consistency of moving through the organisation from the tea-maker to committee member to the secretary to the vice-president to the president to the [Federation] Librarian ... [to editing] the *Bulletin* [and] to the Federation".¹⁸ Fay was elected to the position of Regional Representative for the Federation in 1976.¹⁹

Committees

Hamilton Parents Centre is organised and operated through its committees. These committees have sustained and propelled the organisation despite an ongoing movement of committee members into and through the organisation; people become involved in Parents Centre during the child-rearing stage of their lives, and while some remain involved others move on in parallel with the family life cycle. Current committee members pass on leadership skills to potential committee members, passing on institutional knowledge at the same time. The committees shared a common purpose. As one former member commented, "there was no-one there on a power trip" because they were preparing members for future committee duties.²⁰

These groups have been a strength of the Hamilton Parents Centre since its earliest days. Elsa Wood recalls that they were the most "trouble-free" that she had ever worked on. Elsa remembers that "we never had any fusses ... [and] ... it was special" because the committee "were all working for a special purpose".²¹ The President in 1970, Lynne McCleery, gratefully thanked her committee as being "the most willing and conscientious" that she had "ever had the pleasure to work with", noting especially Eleanor Gibb, Jean Sandos and Fay Foreman for their "help and encouragement".²² These comments reflect the effectiveness of the committees and the dedication of the committee members.

The common purpose underpinning the committees did not mean that consensus was always easy to achieve. Topical issues arose that saw a range of positions taken by committee members. One such issue was breastfeeding 'versus' bottle-feeding, where opinions diverged. Donna Behl recalls this issue being brought into the open for discussion so that "people felt supported in the way they chose". The key for Donna and her committee was that "people would have informed choice", which meant in effect that if they chose to bottle-feed they would have done so having been fully informed about breastfeeding.²³

Other issues arose from time to time that generated debate amongst the committee. With the advent of user-pays in the 1990s and the steady withdrawal of the state from health

services an illustrative incident occurred. Committee member Christine Cave, writing independently and not on behalf of Hamilton Parents Centre, was quoted in *The Waikato Times* as saying that “pregnant women have been processed like lumps of meat for too long and seen as cash cows by GPs”.²⁴ While the comments were in response to GPs charging for maternity services they were taken out of context and this time the medical establishment responded.

An obstetrician, Dr Zig Khouri, wrote an opinion column in the *Waikato Times* castigating the comments made by Christine Cave. The column displayed some antipathy towards her comments, expressing the hope that they were personal opinion and not the views of Parents Centre, where Dr Khouri and many other GPs had “... donated many years of free evenings, lectures and education in order to help provide quality information for ... prospective first time mums and dads”.²⁵ Another GP who had a “good working relationship with” Hamilton Parents Centre wrote a letter to the editor expressing concern that such comments might “alienate” Hamilton Parents Centre from the medical establishment, with “immeasurable harm” being “done to a previously mutually beneficial working relationship”.²⁶

This incident illustrates the tensions which often occur when community-based organisations both deliver services in association or coordination with public institutions and/or professional practices and seek to be advocates at local and/or national level. A similar tension has been comprehensively documented more recently in respect of women’s refuges²⁷.

In the late 1990s new Hamilton Parents Centre Committee members were inducted into the organisation through a new committee members’ pack. The pack was a comprehensive guide to Hamilton Parents Centre’s structure with committee guidelines that considered ethical and procedural issues. There were job descriptions for the various posts within Hamilton Parents Centre that needed filling. These roles were wide-ranging and included (in alphabetical order) Advocacy and Lobbying Convenor, Antenatal Convenor, Centre Statistics Collector, Committee Liaison and Support, Lambskin Officer²⁸, Marketing and Publicity Officer, Membership Officer, Newsletter Editor, President, Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-President.²⁹ The diverse range of roles provided opportunities for committee members to learn new skills that could lead to new opportunities.

An Auxiliary Committee had been established in the early 1980s to support “the people taking the course ... who were actually Committee members”.³⁰ Their role was to assist the running of the course in roles such as Librarian, Secretary or “making the participants feel welcome with seating [and] ... cups of tea”.³¹ The Auxiliary Committee also assisted with fundraising³², did the work behind the distribution of the local newsletter and the *Bulletin* and in doing so have been a vital part of the Parents Centre organisation.³³

Conferences

National Parents Centre conferences were another forum where Parents Centre members from around the country would gather to share experiences and to discuss and debate contemporary issues affecting families. In addition to Committee members attending these in other locations, Hamilton was also the host for a number of national conferences.

In October 1968 Hamilton hosted The Federation of New Zealand Parents Centre Seminar at the Hamilton Teachers College. This meeting was attended by representatives of Parents Centres from around the country as well as medical staff including midwives, nurses, physiotherapists and doctors. The theme was based on Sheila Kitzinger's book *An Approach to Ante-natal Teaching*. Speakers included Professor Jim Ritchie who talked about the teacher's role in antenatal training and the husband's role in family-centred childbirth; Professor Peter Freyberg on the nature of learning; and Dr Wattie Whittlestone from Ruakura Agricultural Research Centre who spoke about the value of the suckling reflex which "gave scientific backing to the work of psychologists such as Maurice Bevan-Brown", supporting the belief that "breastfeeding goes deeper than its obvious result, the supplying of food". Helen Brew, the Parents Centre Dominion Advisor, provided a session on learning how to teach through role-playing.³⁴

In June 1974 it was again Hamilton's turn to host a conference. Dr Whittlestone spoke again, this time on how scientific research supported the "physical and emotional values of breastfeeding". Family sociologist David Swain spoke about parenthood, the stresses it can create and what helps parents cope with the transition to their new role. The restructuring of the Federation was also discussed.³⁵

Denise Irvine was a member of the team who organised the 1984 conference in Hamilton. Wanting the conference to be a significant event, Denise realised that the key speaker was crucial for the event's success. This key speaker was Diony Young the daughter of Nancy Sutherland (another founding member of Parents Centre, from Christchurch). Diony Young lived in the USA and was an active lobbyist and advocate for women's rights, particularly in relation to childbirth. Her keynote address to the conference reflected the issues she advocated overseas and delegates related these to the issues they felt were salient in New Zealand.

Eleven years later (1995) Hamilton hosted the conference again, this time at St Peters School. Speakers included Hilary Weber, the first woman director of the New Zealand Dairy Group and a former member of the Cambridge Parents Centre. Hilary spoke about the effect Parents Centre had on her life and "how it helped her in her current vocation". Psychologist, Stephen Saunders discussed "parenting and the effects of society today on families".^{36 37}

Conferences do not all serve the same purposes, take the same forms, involve the same efforts or produce the same outcomes for the participants. Conferences of voluntary community-based organisations involve a proportionately greater effort and require a

proportionately greater commitment of resources than those in more public sector or (even more so) commercial environments. They must thus deliver more to the participants, or the effort will not be forthcoming. In addition to providing information and enabling collective decision-making, Parents Centre national conferences – and all their variants across the sector – also had to deliver affirmation (that the voluntary effort was worthwhile) and personal rewards (such as social activities). Parents Centre national conferences (and those of sibling organisations such as La Leché League and others) are frequently remembered as delivering all of the above.

Fundraising

Members' subscriptions and course fees have been a major source of revenue for Hamilton Parents Centre. However, these were not profit-making activities as members' subscriptions went towards the *Bulletin*, newsletters, mail costs, and use of the library while course fees covered direct course costs.³⁸ However, Hamilton Parents Centre had other objectives that required fundraising.

The Mothercraft Unit appeal was a major part of fundraising activities in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Elsa Wood through her membership of the Waikato District Health Board had raised the possibility of establishing a Mothercraft Unit and had been told that the Hospital would provide the land if she could raise the funds (see *Chapter Three: Advocacy and Lobbying* for more details). Hamilton Parents Centre fully supported this initiative and made a major contribution towards the establishment costs. Members also raised funds for Elsa's study tour investigating the issue of children in separation (in New Zealand their separation from parents while in hospital was especially salient as an issue) by holding a raffle and selling Christmas cards.³⁹

Applications for funds to run the organisation were made to a wide range of sources. In 1973 the Waikato Savings Bank granted Hamilton Parents Centre \$200 after the secretary Betty Blair made an application. The Bank noted that the grant was made in recognition of the need for the services provided by Hamilton Parents Centre in the Waikato region.⁴⁰ By the late 1970s funds were raised by applying for grants from the Bryant Trust and the Mackenzie Trust, as other methods such as cake-stalls were seen as being too labour intensive.⁴¹ Again the issue here applied and still applies to all community-based organisations that seek both to provide necessary services not otherwise available and to advocate on behalf of particular groups and causes: service provision without external funding requires considerable voluntary time and energy which thus limits what else can be accomplished; charitable funding is typically small-scale and one-off, requiring considerable effort for limited reward; and state funding comes with burdensome accountability requirements and high compliance costs.

Fun activities were also used as a means to raise funds. A 'pramathon' was conducted over a four mile route around the bridges from Garden Place on 10 October 1971 with the participants seeking sponsorship on a per mile basis. Additional funds were raised when Hamilton Parents Centre hosted the gala opening of a Playbox production of *Rape of the Belt*, in 1974. The proceeds went towards some foam squabs called Chiltern wedges

“which greatly added to the comfort of women during physiotherapy sessions at Parents Centre classes”.⁴²

In 1975 inflation was cited as the reason for members’ subscriptions rising from \$1.50 to \$3.00. Immediate efforts to raise funds included a cake stall and a cotton waste collection where 30 cents was paid for each pound of 24” x 24” sheets supplied.⁴³ Financial pressure was felt through the organisation as costs rose and as a result the number of newsletters was cut.⁴⁴

During the 1980s fundraising was organised by a specialised Fundraising Committee which sought funds across a range of sources. Revenue came from the sale of sheepskins, rentals of children’s car seats and events like car rallies.⁴⁵ In 1981 the “main fundraising activity of the year” was the Op Shop in Keddell Street, where Hamilton Parents Centre got the proceeds of the shop for the month of December. Members were encouraged to contribute as many summer clothes as possible to meet the target of five cartons of donated items per day.⁴⁶

During the 1970s another funding source came from the sale of the *Becoming a Parent* booklet, which was authored and published by Hamilton Parents Centre. Originally entitled *Expecting a Baby* the booklet was first put together during Catherine Smith’s presidency and had the bonus of reducing the workload imposed by the regular duplication of antenatal materials⁴⁷. These booklets, edited by Denise Irvine and originally published in an A5 format, were sold through Parents Centres nation-wide. Some of the profits went to the Waikato Sick Babies Trust⁴⁸. In the early 1990s the book changed to A4 size and was revised⁴⁹ and republished in conjunction with Christchurch Parents Centre⁵⁰.

A number of different fundraising efforts were employed in the 1990s. In 1994 the Fundraising Committee raised well over their expected \$2000 by “selling chocolates and lollies”, “holding sausage sizzles” at Pak’n’Save, having a “Fun Run”, and selling raffle tickets at the hot-air Balloon Fiesta and at a Toy Expo.⁵¹ Similar fundraising efforts were employed the following year with the Fundraising Committee noting in the Annual Report that “we really needed to adopt one large project annually to tie in promotion of our activities and to limit the call on members ... to once a year”.⁵² This single fundraising event turned out to be the inaugural Teddy Bears Picnic held in Steele Park, Hamilton East, on 3 March 1996. It was a “resounding success” with approximately 4500 people attending.⁵³ This event has since been held annually, moving to the Hamilton Gardens towards the end of the 1990s. In 1998 there were letters to the editor in the *The Waikato Times* congratulating Hamilton Parents Centre for organising the event⁵⁴.

Some social service organisations which were established in the same era as Parents Centre later developed service delivery contracts with public sector agencies which heavily subsidised service delivery (for example, Marriage Guidance / Relationship Services’ contract to deliver Family Court counselling) and enabled a transition from volunteers who were trained and supervised to deliver professional services to a paid workforce, albeit not well paid. Others pioneered services which were later incorporated

into public sector provisions (as has been widespread with Parents Centre antenatal classes). However the problem of social services funding persists, as exemplified by the limitations on both the holding of family group conferences under the *Children Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989* and the implementation of plans agreed by such meetings, continues to be a major issue. New Zealanders may be creative and innovative in developing social services and other social sector provisions, but their implementation and especially their funding can limit their achievements.

The Library

From the beginning Hamilton Parents Centre established its own library of books relevant to the area of parenting and childhood, which members could borrow to read. By 1959 the books held in the library were valued at £17 0s 0d.⁵⁵ The library grew with funds being allocated for resources to support the programmes they offered, with \$50 being set aside in 1973 for books related to the Toddlers Course.⁵⁶ The books were catalogued and loaned using a card lending system, with all books being covered in plastic film for their protection by members. Managing the stock was quite a task, with regular reminders being printed in the newsletter requesting that members return borrowed items.

Towards the end of 1963 Judy Pickard who had become involved with Hamilton Parents Centre soon after its foundation, approached the Federation with a suggestion that initiated the Federation Library being held in Hamilton. The Federation readily accepted Judy's proposal and the Library was established in Hamilton. After nine years as Federation Librarian Judy was appointed as Hamilton City Librarian. Former Hamilton Parents Centre President Fay Foreman took over responsibility for maintaining the library from Judy. Under-bed storage was the mode for much of this period, but in 1977 David Swain proposed to the Federation that the library be housed in the Parent Education Archive in the Department of Sociology, University of Waikato. This archive contained an extensive range of other parent education materials that would become more accessible for Parents Centre members, researchers and other interested parties.⁵⁷ Some years later the Archive was shifted into Helen May's care in the Centre for Early Childhood, Hamilton Teachers College, and it was further relocated with Helen's move to Wellington, now residing in the Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres Archives in the Institute for Early Childhood Studies at Victoria University, Wellington. The large collection of books on parenting topics that had been acquired by donation and purchase in the 1970s and 1980s but were available only to Hamilton Parents Centre members was moved to Hamilton Public Library, into a special parent education section, where they were then available to the public.

Newsletters

In 1962 the committee decided to commence production of a regular newsletter for distribution to Hamilton Parents Centre members. The newsletter was edited and distributed by Barbara Redfern.⁵⁸ They were typed and photocopied and were an ongoing source of information. Distributed to current members they provided a range of information on courses, upcoming events, tips on parenting, school holiday activities,

recipes, poems, meetings, and an endless range of other parenting advice. As mentioned earlier the newsletters' frequency was reduced in the 1970s and they were posted together with the *Bulletin* to reduce costs.⁵⁹ In the 1990s the newsletters were renamed *Newsview* and were produced with more information about parenting, averaging about 20 to 25 pages per issue.⁶⁰ In 1996 the frequency of these was increased from five to six per year with members' articles forming the "backbone" of the *Newsview*.⁶¹

From *The Bulletin* to *Kiwi Parent*

For a period from 1980 the magazine of the Federation, the *Bulletin*, was "produced by an editorial collective" of Hamilton Parents Centre members that comprised Venetia Sherson, Denise Irvine, Fay Foreman and David Swain.⁶² Contributors were drawn from across the Federation but there was considerable input from other Hamilton Parents Centre members. The original group of four editors reduced over time to three and then two, Venetia Sherson and Denise Irvine⁶³, who developed and enhanced the *Bulletin* during their tenure. The *Bulletin* became the *Parents Centre Magazine* from 1988 to 1995 and was then renamed and reformulated again as *Kiwi Parent* magazine in 1996⁶⁴.

Links to Other Organisations

The association of the Hamilton Parents Centre with other parenting or child welfare groups has been another ongoing feature and strength of the organisation. These connections date back to the organisation's first general meeting held in 1957, which was initiated by the Hamilton Branch of the Family Planning Association (FPA). Indeed overlapping groups and a dense network of individuals (mostly women) were involved in the establishment and/or development over a period of time of a cluster of Hamilton, Waikato regional and even national bodies, including (in alphabetical order) the Family Planning Association, the Foster Care Association, La Leché League, Marriage Guidance (later to become Relationship Services) and Playcentre as well as Parents Centre – not to mention sister organisations such as the Women's Electoral Lobby and the Hamilton United Women's Convention committee. In the early 1980s Hamilton Parents Centre supported the establishment of the Waikato Sick Babies Trust. The purpose of this charitable trust was to "promote and serve the welfare of newly born babies in our region".⁶⁵

Strong links were founded and maintained with the local medical establishment. In particular Matron Pat Elson and the nursing staff of Campbell Johnstone were acknowledged for their support of the antenatal class visits which couples consistently reported as being a "valued" component of their preparation for childbirth.⁶⁶ Some midwives and paediatricians were especially supportive of Parents Centre and similar organisations such as La Leché League, notably midwife Heather Rigg, who was also the key facilitator and interviewer of David Swain's 1975 Pregnancy & Parenthood Research Project⁶⁷, which studied the transition to parenthood of a cohort of first-time Hamilton mothers and showed – unlike overseas studies – that new mothers in Hamilton were not experiencing pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood as a crisis, although the transition involved many challenges and was characterised by some stress and fatigue⁶⁸.

In the 1990s links were maintained with the College of Midwives with a number of present or past Parents Centre members, namely Samantha Schultz, Christine Cave and Philipa Morrison, being involved in the review panels.⁶⁹ Close liaison was also sought with other community groups that shared mutual interests. The La Leché League was established in Hamilton with the support of the Hamilton Parents Centre in 1968. The La Leché League advocated breastfeeding over bottle feeding for the physical and psychological well-being of both mother and child. This link is maintained to today, with La Leché League and Hamilton Parents Centre sharing the same premises, Parents Place in Little London Street, Hamilton.

Marriage Guidance (now Relationship Services) contributed to antenatal training with a session on communication. Hamilton Parents Centre also “wholeheartedly” supported ParentLine, with a call going out to Hamilton Parents Centre members to volunteer to offer “practical help like childminding, an outing, etc.” for “young mothers under stress”.⁷⁰ Combined discussion groups involving Hamilton Parents Centre and ParentLine representatives were held in the postnatal wards at Waikato Hospital during 1981.⁷¹ The following year two talks were given for the Hospital’s obstetric staff about “postnatal support and infertility support groups”.⁷² The Plunket Karitane Family Support Unit (where the services of one Plunket and two Karitane nurses were on hand to assist parents⁷³) was also promoted through the Hamilton Parents Centre newsletter. In and since the 1990s however, across sectors from tertiary education to early childhood, the cooperative approach which has been traditional especially but not only among voluntary and community-based agencies has been strained, sometimes to breaking point, by various Governments’ promotion of contestable funding and other incentives for competition and the imposition of more guarded sharing of information which thus developed some “commercial sensitivity”.

Hamilton Parents Centre was also the catalyst for, or involved in, the foundation of several new community organisations and trusts. These included organisations like the New Mothers Support Group, the Combined Social Service Association⁷⁴ and the Hamilton Playgrounds Trust. The latter of these was formed in conjunction with other community groups. One of the co-administrators in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Donna Behl, was instrumental in setting this up. Donna demonstrates the importance of the interpersonal networking links among local organisations to which reference has already been made in these words:

I knew a few people in Plunket and Playcentre and we got several people together from each organisation and we also went to the Waikato Kindergarten Association, Hamilton Childcare Services Trust, we approached Accident Compensation Corporation and the University of Waikato ... we had quite a large group of people ... We all had neat ideas but we didn’t know how to apply for funding. Between us we all had different amounts of expertise and from our Parents Centre time or Plunket time we tried to put all that expertise together and access some funds whilst liaising with the Hamilton City Council at the same time

I think it was about the mid-80s when we formed a trust, an incorporated society, to make sure that we could access some good funding because the five or six thousand dollars that we raised wasn't going to go anywhere. By the time we got to the end of it, the plan would cost \$120,000 for Parana Park ... which took two or three years which then continued on once that venture was completed because it was really a collaborative venture between those groups. We got to look around the Lake Domain playground and we developed all that and fundraised for some of that, and we had just finished off paying the last \$50,000 for that venture and the Hamilton City Council asked us to be involved in the Claudelands Park development.

Belonging to the Hamilton Parents Centre meant that other organisations services were made available to members. In 1970 the Waikato University Students Association / Staff Wives' Club⁷⁵ Babysitting Service offered its services to Hamilton Parents Centre members at a basic rate of 30 cents per hour⁷⁶. In addition to receiving services the members were also called upon to donate their time, such as the case of ParentLine, or on occasions to donate their breast-milk. In 1984 the milk bank at Waikato Hospital requested the services of members who had excess breast-milk, which was urgently needed by "ill or premature babies" or for mothers who were having trouble lactating.⁷⁷ Another example of altruism arose in 1996 when the organisation donated \$1500 worth of children's books to the Hamilton City Library.⁷⁸

Chapter Three: Advocacy and Lobbying

Introduction

Advocacy and lobbying have been an integral part of Hamilton Parents Centre since it began. The issues that the organisation originally addressed and still addresses have had a significant impact not only upon the Waikato region, but at the nationwide scale. Hamilton Parents Centre has attracted many motivated, even driven, women (and a few men) who have identified key problems in the community and tackled them. Their capacity to rally the support of their Parents Centre committees, members and the wider community have contributed to changes in medical practices, parental support and national policy.

The advocacy role of Hamilton Parents Centre can be separated into conceptually distinct categories: (a) personal advocacy, on behalf of a person, family or other specific party and seeking a specific outcome; (b) process advocacy, for general compliance with specified policies, guidelines, regulations and the like, perhaps associated with a particular alleged case of non-compliance but equally possibly arising from a perceived pattern of non-compliance; and (c) policy advocacy, for new policy or significant change to existing policy (including policy enacted in legislation).

The first two categories above imply that the target for the advocacy is inherent in the situation: there is an agency or authority dealing with either a specific party or a broader group of parties whose decisions and/or actions the advocacy is intended to change. The advocacy is undertaken in the context of the beliefs, norms, understandings, interpretations, priorities and the like that are treated as relevant by the relevant agency or authority. Issues may centre on the discretion or scope for making various decisions available to individuals, agencies and authorities and/or on the interpretation of legal requirements, policies and the like. Some matters are less immediately accessible to advocacy and discussion, including individual and institutional inertia (the weight of routine and tradition), the interests that groups such as managers or professional practitioners may have in particular practices and provisions (whether that interest is evident to them or unexamined and taken for granted), and the covert power of particular stakeholders. The broader climate of opinion, the norms and assumptions of majority cultures and broader social patterns such as the distribution of power by gender, social class, age group or other social categories may also be relevant. This advocacy isn't easy!

The third category is somewhat more open, but models of social policy formulation generally include both the assumption of a statutory basis for policies and their implementation and an emphasis on the critical importance of implementation for outcomes. Policy advocacy may thus be focused on legislative change with consequent changes in implementation, or on policy change within the broad parameters established by general enabling legislation.

Thus the Parents' Centres' advocacy of open visiting for children in hospital and the opportunity for parents to stay with their children in their ward 24 hours, seven day a week, did not require legislative change but it did require changes in policy (at board and senior management level) and in its implementation by hospital ward staff (at the interface with parents and children). The advocacy of a requirement for domestic swimming pools to be fenced did require both legislative change and active implementation at local authority level.

There is in theory a potential tension between advocacy and service delivery. Advocacy may require assertive confrontation and service delivery may require active cooperation with the same agencies and persons; the former may be thought to put the latter at risk. The more closely service delivery is integrated with other agencies, including the provision of funding or other resources, the more constrained is advocacy likely to be⁷⁹.

There is also no guarantee that the particular shared values and aspiration which have over so long a period brought people together as committee members and office-holders in Hamilton Parents Centre to deliver various services such as antenatal classes would result in consensus on contentious issues where advocacy might be desired by some and opposed by others. If such potential advocacy topics are avoided unless there is consensus there is in effect a veto available to any who care to join the organisation for any reason. If topics are pursued in the face of opposition from some members, there is always the possibility of the organisation losing members and perhaps facing unfavourable and unhelpful publicity, perhaps reducing its capacity to advocate.

Issues on which there was unlikely to be unanimity during Hamilton Parents Centre's first thirty or forty years may be thought to include abortion, childcare and paid employment for women with younger children, partnership under the Treaty, adoption ... During the same period there was broadly a trend towards closer involvement and even greater integration with public bodies and the relevant health and other professionals, which would over time have raised the opportunity cost of some advocacy issues.

Voluntary and community-based social sector organisations have been a major and particular feature, and arguably a great strength, of the welfare state in New Zealand for up to a century. Other welfare states such as those of the Nordic countries have always seen local authorities and quasi-public bodies as the main partners of central government in the delivery of the welfare state, and the situation in New Zealand has been changing since the 1990s. Such bodies could both pioneer new thinking and provisions (such as Playcentre, the Family Planning Association, Marriage Guidance now Relationship Services), provide needed social services and act as advocates and critics of government policy and provisions.

Some well-recognised bodies such as the Plunket Society⁸⁰ have worked in partnership with government for a very long time, delivering child health services which in other societies would be delivered by government or local authorities. More recently Marriage Guidance, now Relationship Services, holds major contracts with government e.g. for delivering Family Court counselling services. The relationship in these

instances can perhaps be characterised as agent for the government in service delivery, with the influence on legislation, policy and funding (for example) being limited to making submissions, usually during government-initiated “consultation” processes.

Other more recent agencies such as women’s refuges (the first was established in Christchurch in 1973) and the National Collective of Independent Women’s Refuges Inc. (established in 1981) began as independent feminist organisations characterised by flat organisational structures and collective decision-making and by strong agendas for advocacy and social change as well as the provision of an essential social service but found that partial government funding of their service provisions (the actual refuges and sometimes other related services) carried a high price in terms of direct compliance with accountability reporting requirements and indirect compliance with organisational forms (hierarchical bureaucracy rather than flat group, formal meeting protocols rather than consensual decision-making). Where the social agenda of an organisation is radical (as it is with the NCIWR and arguably as it was with the early Parents Centres) the tension between service delivery and advocacy can be substantial.

What, then, is the story of Hamilton Parents Centre’s advocacy role over the years?

Medicalisation and the Rights of Women in Childbirth

In 1957 medical practices reflected a broader ideology of scientific legitimacy and indeed supremacy, especially in a medical model of childbirth. Women were placed on their backs during labour, their legs bound in white socks and placed in stirrups. Women were often completely anaesthetised during birth. Giving birth was often treated as a completely clinical procedure in which the doctor possessed all the knowledge and experience of the procedure and women were ignorant patients, passive in the face of the expertise of their assigned medical practitioner. While some doctors advocated the rights of women in childbirth, the attitude of the broader medical establishment largely removed women from the experience of birth by medicalising the process. Grantly Dick-Read’s book *Childbirth Without Fear* (1960, first published 1942) challenged this medical perspective towards childbirth and advocated a natural approach, informing pregnant women of what to expect during pregnancy, labour and childbirth. In his book he claimed that by understanding what happens during birth, women could be prepared and could find birth a rewarding experience. Grantly Dick-Read’s book became a cornerstone of Hamilton Parents Centre’s struggle with a powerful medical establishment’s dominant and clinical approach to birth. They educated women on Grantly Dick-Read’s techniques, challenged hospital practices and challenged medical staff to take their requests seriously. The ongoing commitment of Hamilton Parents Centre members and some committed proactive doctors, midwives and other medical staff had a direct impact on medical practices around birth in Hamilton – and the work of Parents Centres around New Zealand had a similar albeit uneven national impact as well.

In the early days, in order to attend Hamilton Parents Centre antenatal classes women were expected first to get permission from their doctor. This demonstrates the hegemony the medical establishment held over the birth process. Their control was

buttressed by their control of access to services that educated women on birth. Elsa Wood advocated on behalf of Hamilton Parents Centre, in an attempt to raise understanding of the Parents Centre philosophy and teachings. She approached doctors in Hamilton to raise awareness of Parents Centre and to encourage them to “allow” their patients to attend Parents Centre antenatal classes. The attitude she met was not often openly resistant but was frequently dismissive. As Elsa said, “I visited a number of them and on the whole they thought ‘the dear things, let them get on with it as long as they don’t tread on our professional grounds’”.⁸¹ The Hamilton Parents Centre representatives continued to advocate for natural childbirth and increased control of the birth process for pregnant women.

What is taken for granted today was, in the early days of Hamilton Parents Centre, a central issue. For example, women were literally placed in positions that were convenient for the doctor rather than comfortable for the woman. Fay Foreman recalled, “...[I]t was quite some time before Parents Centre advocated for mothers to have cushions at the back to prop their legs up into a more comfortable position to give birth, but that took some time. There was a gradual wearing away of the old regime [and] the doctors power really.”⁸² Even the height of the beds the women were put on to give birth was set to the height most comfortable for the doctor⁸³. The power of the medical establishment, in terms of its capacity to determine the way that childbirth would proceed, was extensive. As Fay Forman said, “The hospital did still have a very powerful grip on what happened to you when you walked through those doors.”⁸⁴ Even into the 1950s, strict bed rest with the baby in a nursery was considered by many nurses to be the most efficient measure to maximise the mother’s recovery.⁸⁵ Women were rarely told what would happen during childbirth and were usually completely reliant upon the knowledge and expertise of doctors and midwives.

Judy Pickard recalled that women had to “shop around” for medical staff who would support (or at least agree to) the approach to pregnancy, labour and birth that Parent Centre advocated.⁸⁶ Parent Centres across New Zealand challenged the medical establishment, advocating for women’s greater understanding of and participation in the process of birth. They advertised their organisation informing women of their presence. Stories and community notices regularly appeared in the Waikato Times, heightening Hamilton Parents Centre’s visibility within the Waikato community. They wrote letters to the editor of the Waikato Times, challenging assumptions of medical power and reasserting messages about the need for women to be well educated prior to birth and for husbands to be present with women during labour and birth. Their campaign did not go unchallenged. Medical professionals responded to Hamilton Parent Centres principles. For example, one medical specialist demonstrated his objection to Hamilton Parent Centres vocal campaign for fathers’ presence in hospitals during birth. He wrote,

Sir - I would be interested to learn from some well-informed spokesman of the Parents’ Centre what scientific evidence there is for the view that the physical presence of the father in the labour room at the time of delivery somehow improves the emotional and psychological relationship between a man and his wife. I have little difficulty in believing that the emotions are affected, because the cult of the Parents Centre is itself highly subjective and emotional. I

personally wish that this organisation would confine itself to its one sensible activity, namely, funding antenatal physiotherapy classes, and leave the arrangements in the labour wards to the good taste of the obstetricians and nursing staff.⁸⁷

Child in Separation and “Rooming in”

“Children in separation” was during the late 1960s and early 1970s a key issue for Hamilton Parents’ Centre. There was research which indicated that children who were separated from their parents suffered adverse consequences⁸⁸ and thus hospital stays for children attracted the attention of Parents Centre representatives. Influenced by the research and approach of James and Joyce Robertson of the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London, Hamilton Parents Centre representatives sought to reduce the extent of maternal (primary caregiver) deprivation when children were hospitalised.

Historically parents of children in hospital were only allowed to visit during designated visiting hours. In some hospitals, these might be only half an hour twice a week.⁸⁹ Judy Pickard recalled, “[w]e’d both had experiences of children being thrown into hospital in the middle of the night, with the children left screaming their heads off. So we did a survey of ... all the hospitals in New Zealand to find out what their practice was and then we started the big push”.⁹⁰

The findings of the survey, undertaken by Judy Pickard and the Federation of University Women, were presented to the Medical Superintendent of the Waikato Public Hospital in 1963. The report suggested that Waikato Public Hospital allow “more relaxed visiting hours”, create a “separate school and playroom for walking patients”, and the “provision of accommodation for mothers to stay in hospital with their young children”⁹¹. In 1964 this issue had still not been adequately addressed. Judy Pickard, mother of a hospitalised five-year-old boy, recounted her experience when her son was admitted to Waikato Hospital with osteomyelitis. Upon returning to visit her son the following day, she was told to return between 2 and 3 pm, the official visiting hours of the hospital. She recalled “He used to scream when I left, but at the same time seemed terrified of my staying. I discovered many years later that nurses had threatened him that I would not be allowed to visit at all if I did not leave when I was told ...”.⁹²

Hamilton Parents Centre began a campaign to address the issue and effect changes that would enhance the emotional safety of hospitalised children. But addressing this issue meant challenging the understanding that hospital staff had about child behaviour and the child-parent relationship. It also became apparent that the best way to effect change would be to get a representative elected to the Waikato Hospital Board. Hamilton Parents Centre members undertook a strong campaign for Elsa Wood’s candidacy, and while she was told not to expect to be elected on her first attempt, the campaign was very successful. Elsa Wood became the voice of Parents Centre on the Waikato Hospital Board in 1968.

Addressing the understanding and attitudes of hospital staff was central to the implementation of flexible visiting hours and parents “rooming in” with ill children⁹³. Elsa Wood recalled a visit she made to one hospital where the nurses wanted to “show off” their children’s ward. “The then Matron and Matron-in-Chief were both elderly spinsters and they said to me ‘Oh Mrs Wood, come along to the children’s ward, you’ll love it, it’s so quiet’. And I felt like saying ‘Don’t you know why?’ but I wasn’t rude enough. ‘It’s so quiet,’ they said ‘we just don’t believe all those stories about them wanting their mothers, they’d always cry when they came. They only need kindness, warmth and food’ ... isn’t that ignorant.”⁹⁴ Elsa Wood was elected President of the Committee for the Welfare of Children in Separation. The first meeting of this Committee (held on 15 March 1974) generated its main aims. It was decided that they would collect and distribute information on this issue and sponsor local areas’ provision of guidelines on content and personnel. They also provided reports to all New Zealand Parents Centres, distributed informational leaflets and generated new ideas to address the issue.⁹⁵

In her role as President, Elsa Wood spoke at a variety of institutions, organisations and meetings, including Parents Centres throughout New Zealand and the Registered Nurses Association. She was invited by the Chief Tutor at the Waikato Hospital to speak to every new intake of nurses about maternal deprivation. She focused on the needs of non-verbal children, stressing the importance of being with their mothers “... at least all day and preferably at night too.”⁹⁶ Such talks had a large impact on some individuals. Elsa Wood recalls being approached by one nurse who had been present at her speech on maternal deprivation. She asked Elsa, “And what do we do if we have an ogre of a Sister who won’t let the mothers come for more than half an hour?” Elsa responded that while there may not be much the nurse could do at the time, when she took charge, she would know what to do.⁹⁷ In 1969, largely as a result of Elsa Wood’s efforts, the visiting hours for children in Waikato Hospital were extended from one hour per day. From 1969, parents could visit their children between the hours of 10:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m.⁹⁸

The issue of children in separation did not disappear with the lengthening of Waikato Hospital’s visiting hours. Rooming-in was still a contentious issue and Elsa Wood continued her vocal campaign to address this concern. She travelled around the world, attending conferences and visiting hospitals, gathering information and learning from international practices. She wrote letters to local newspapers, informing the public of her research and her recommendations on how to manage the problem. She drew on examples of overseas hospitals that encouraged parents to stay with their children in hospital.⁹⁹ In 1974, her report to Parents Centre on her most recent activities provided recommendations of areas that still need work in hospitals. These included unrestricted visiting hours for parents to their children, daily visits of small children to general wards to see family members (including siblings), daily visits of small children to maternity wards to visit their mothers, live-in breastfeeding facilities for mothers of children in hospital (and vice versa), and eventual live-in accommodation for parents of sick children at the hospital.¹⁰⁰

In 1975, in an attempt to encourage Waikato Hospital to invite parents to stay with sick children, Hamilton Parents Centre fundraised for, purchased and donated folding beds

to the hospital¹⁰¹. They also included this information in Parents Centre newsletters, encouraging parents to “spread the word” and request the beds if their children were hospitalised.¹⁰² With the support of other Parents Centres in the region fourteen folding beds were donated to a variety of hospitals. By 1976, Elsa Wood had positive feedback for Parents Centre members. She advised that Rotorua Hospital had contacted her and expressed how much use the beds were getting, in some nights “2 or 3 people staying overnight with their children.”¹⁰³

Elsa Wood’s comments on the children in separation issue did not go unchallenged either. Her position was that long hospital confinements, away from their mother, can be damaging to the emotional wellbeing of children. She extended this position to include young children spending long hours in day care and crèches. This coincided with a social climate in which it was increasingly expected that women would return to the paid workforce shortly after the birth of their child. For some, this was an economic necessity; for others, it was a matter of personal accomplishment.

Letters to local newspapers demonstrated an angry response from some readers. One wrote “It is disturbing to read of a Hospital Board member recommending more legislation that takes away the right of an individual woman to decide for herself what is best in her circumstances. Mrs Wood wants to make it illegal for crèches to take children under three years of age. I also resent Mrs Wood’s statement that ‘[a]nyone but a mother or permanent mother substitute is second best’ for very young children. This is insulting to those fathers who care for children and to those crèches which provide a very high level of care for those in their charge”.¹⁰⁴

A second reader wrote: “I hope that any who are considering working - or any mother at all, if it comes to that - will not be swayed by propaganda and idealised pictures of ‘life at home with the baby,’...”.¹⁰⁵ Jim and Jane Ritchie wrote of their concerns in regards to the “general state of alarm” of the children in separation issue. They were concerned that the campaign could be “...responsible for an upsurge of guilt feelings amongst young parents who have been forced to leave their children for some legitimate reason in the past.”¹⁰⁶ They stressed the importance of distinguishing between the lengths of separation, such as long-term, short-term, day-care and hospitalisation. It is important to note that Hamilton Parents Centre was not opposed to day-care but, rather, advocated that day-care establishments should be required to provide the “very best possible mother-substitute”^{107 108}. Regardless of the criticism, Elsa Wood continued to advocate that the issue of maternal deprivation needed to be taken seriously.

Elsa continued to speak at public meetings on maternal deprivation. She travelled around the world, stressing the importance of a stable parent or “mother-substitute” to care for children and the importance of breastfeeding. She recognised how contentious this issue was but, regardless of the criticism, continued to research and speak to the issue of maternal deprivation.¹⁰⁹ Her commitment to this cause saw parent visiting hours for children in hospital extended and the opportunity for parents to “room in” in some hospitals. This issue continues to be of interest to medical professionals, parents and child advocates, especially in a modern climate of increasing numbers of both

parents working and heightened social acceptance of single parents raising children. The work undertaken by Elsa Wood has provided a wealth of information and given sympathisers to her perspective a platform to continue her work.

Recently Hamilton Parent Centre members have returned to this issue. They are concerned about children in high dependency units and intensive care. In 2003 a meeting was held involving Hamilton Parents Centre, La Leché League, the Homebirth Association, midwives and lactation experts. Waikato Hospital provides on-site accommodation at the Hilda Ross building on the Hospital campus for parents of infants in hospital. The building is, however, located quite a distance from where the children are cared for and breastfeeding mothers often have to walk across the hospital grounds at all hours of the night to feed their children. One Parent Centre member stated that “sometimes you’re not let in apparently so there are real issues there.”¹¹⁰ She went on to say that “we have been hearing [about] ongoing women’s issues postnatally [from] women who have had these experiences, so Parents Centres throughout the country have got together now”.¹¹¹ Their intention is to raise awareness of the importance of breastfeeding mothers of children in hospital being near their children, being able to continue breastfeeding and feeling safe doing so.

The Mothercraft Unit

In 1968 during Elsa Wood’s first meeting on the Waikato Hospital Board, a letter from the Matron of Campbell Johnstone, Roslyn Squibbs, was tabled. Matron Squibbs was requesting that a free-standing building for a unit to teach what was to become known as “mothercraft” to new mothers be built on the Hospital grounds. Her primary concern was that mothers were going home ill-prepared for breastfeeding. Matron Squibbs requested that Elsa Wood speak to the letter during the Board meeting.¹¹² Elsa recalled “I knew I had to speak to it, and you just didn’t do that as a newcomer at your first Board meeting.”¹¹³ She did however address the tabled letter and argued that land should be provided for Matron Squibbs’ proposed unit. She gained the support of an older Board member who suggested that they donate the land once Elsa Wood raised the money to build the unit.

Elsa Wood believed that the Board members assumed she would never raise the money. She said “I could see their faces saying ‘Dear wee girl, she’ll never do it but we’ll give her something to do’. They didn’t know did they?”¹¹⁴ Elsa Wood went on to enlist the support and assistance of Hamilton Parents Centre, raising funds and awareness and gathering support. By 1969 awareness of and support for the Mothercraft Unit project was well established. The Hamilton Parents’ Centre’s executive meeting in November 1969 addressed the project, acknowledging the significance of Elsa Wood’s energy and enthusiasm in getting the project moving.¹¹⁵

The objectives of the Mothercraft Unit were to address issues of infant welfare by training mothers to breastfeed or bottle-feed “weakling” babies who had been in the intensive care nursery of Waikato Hospital. It was envisioned that the mothers would need to stay in the Mothercraft Unit for 7-10 days during which time they would be

taught the skills they would need to address the special needs of their children. It was thought that this Unit would also address the needs of young mothers of first babies and those who did not have easy access to Plunket or Public Health Nurses.¹¹⁶

Elsa Wood¹¹⁷ sought donations from many local businesses, organisations and private residents. She was eventually able to raise over \$40,000 in donations through voluntary fund-raising efforts. The Hamilton Parents Centre committee staged a telephone appeal asking their members for donations and members organised a house-to-house collection to help raise money for the Unit. While Hamilton Parents Centre was central to the appeal, there were many other people and organisations involved in raising funds. The Mothercraft Unit was built with 10 single bedrooms on the Hospital site¹¹⁸, the first of its kind in New Zealand. It was officially opened at 2:00 p.m. on 23 September 1972. The Mothercraft Unit fulfilled its original purpose of assisting mothers who had babies and children just out of intensive care but it also addressed a number of other needs. It served mothers who were having problems breastfeeding, inexperienced mothers unsure of how to cope with a new baby, newly adoptive mothers of babies and mothers of slightly older children who were not progressing at home.¹¹⁹

The economic “rationalisation” of the 1980s and a short-term financial perspective rather than a long-term outcomes approach resulted in the Mothercraft Unit being seen by the Hospital management as not an economically “viable” operation. In 1983 the Unit was “temporarily” shut at weekends by the Waikato Hospital Board. Concern arose from the community about the effect caused by closing the Mothercraft Unit when “mothers and babies might not be admitted when they should” and/or would be “discharged too soon” or when the “fragile, newly-established routine would be disrupted by transfer to other wards”.¹²⁰ Hamilton Parents Centre formed a lobbying group that applied pressure for the Unit’s weekend re-opening. A review of their decision in April 1985 saw the Hospital Board reaffirm its policy on the temporary weekend closure.

In August 1985 the Unit was shut completely, with the Hospital Board citing “staff shortages and costs” as the reason. This provided an increased impetus for the lobbying group who were “much more outspoken in public on the issue” and in the local media, also getting local Members of Parliament to lobby the Minister of Health on the issue.¹²¹ The Hamilton Parents Centre President at the time, Jill Duncalfe, organised a task-force (which included other organisations such as Playcentre) to “prepare a submission aimed at getting the Hospital Board to make a commitment to the Unit, so it would not face closure again.”¹²² A protest march down Victoria Street, the main city centre street, was organised by Hamilton Parents Centre lobbyist Rosanne Bjerring, and the Unit was reopened.

The Mothercraft Unit continues to operate in Hamilton during weekdays. The service provides welcome support to many mothers throughout the Waikato and surrounding areas. It closes on weekends, the residents returning home, and reopens on Monday mornings.

Pool Fencing

The 1982 Parents Centre's conference discussed the issue of pool fencing. Parents Centre members were concerned about the number of child deaths by drowning in private swimming pools. Seventeen children under the age of five drowned in swimming pools in 1981.¹²³ The then National President of Parents Centre, Jeanette Conland, addressed Parents Centres across the country, informing them that research into local fencing legislation across New Zealand had produced little feedback from City Councils and that the Parents Centre Federation intended to send a submission to the Local Bills Select Committee on the issue. The Federation's intention was to ensure that legislation require all private swimming pools be adequately fenced so as to reduce the risk of children drowning. Hamilton Parents Centre became involved with lobbying the government. They informed Members of Parliament about the risks of unfenced swimming pools, collected research on local body fencing bylaws and wrote letters to the editors of local newspapers to draw attention to the issue. As Rosemary Robertson said at the time, "There is a moral obligation for our society and its members to protect its silent minority, the under-fives who are unable to speak or fend for themselves." Five years after Parents Centres conference discussion on pool fencing the *Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987* was passed, making the fencing all private swimming pools mandatory. A suitable fence (constructed so as to minimise the chances of children climbing it) 1.2 metres high must completely enclose the swimming pool area and have a latched gate that opens outwards¹²⁴.

Biculturalism

Hamilton Parent Centre has traditionally been an organisation that has largely attracted middle class pakeha women (and a few pakeha men). While their advocacy and lobbying activities have sought to achieve positive outcomes for all parents in society, the services have largely been provided to a specific demographic in the Waikato community. A national conference report from 1981 noted the specific needs of Maori within the Parents Centre organisation. One Rotorua Parents Centre member spoke about her experiences and personal difficulties of belonging to Parents Centre. In an address to the conference she spoke about those difficulties voicing concern about the application of pakeha values about child-raising to Maori¹²⁵. A Hamilton Parents Centre newsletter reported "she has a point and something we should be sensitive to and think about".

In 1991 Donna Behl and Debbie Ford attempted to address the issue of bi-culturalism, their aim was to commit Hamilton Parent Centre to becoming a bicultural organisation. Not all Parent Centre members supported this move. As Donna Behl said "...it created a huge amount of discussion because it was such a big thing in the '80s because people were at hugely different stages of understanding of what it means to be committed to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi."¹²⁶ Donna and Debbie decided that the best way to inform members of what this would mean for the organisation was to establish workshops which were to be safe forums for discussion and education. Maori membership of Hamilton Parents Centre did not significantly increase, perhaps because there were at this time other Maori antenatal resources in the community, but as Donna

said "...if nothing else happened from that remit, it actually got people in Centres right throughout the country into Treaty of Waitangi workshops".

Playgrounds

During the 1980s Hamilton Parents Centre began a new campaign to improve children's playgrounds in local parks. Local children's playgrounds were becoming dilapidated and at times unsafe. During a Parent Centre conference in New Plymouth Donna Behl joined a group to look at Pukekura Park where a new playground had been erected. The design, safety features and colours appealed to the Parent Centre members. Upon returning to Hamilton, the Parent Centre members began inspecting Hamilton playgrounds and were disturbed by the condition they were in. Determined to address this problem, they initiated a committee of interested individuals. Donna recalled "I knew a few people in Plunket and Playcentre and we got several people together from each organisation. We also went to the Waikato Kindergarten Association [and the] Hamilton Childcare Services Trust. We approached ACC and the University of Waikato. We had quite a large group of people and we all had neat ideas but we didn't know how to apply for funding ... we tried to put all that expertise together and from our Parents Centre or Plunket time ... and access some funds while liaising with the Hamilton City Council at the same time".¹²⁷

They formed an incorporated society in the mid-1980s to access good funding and developed a plan for a playground at Piranha Park. It took three years to raise the \$120,000 required for the first playground. Donna Behl has continued to work on the Playground Trust committee that she helped to form in the mid-1980s. She has continued to invite the involvement of Hamilton Parents Centre members to encourage younger people to contribute new ideas to ongoing playground development. This topic and campaign illustrates well the very effective personal networking which can be achieved among people involved in organisations such as Parents Centre.

Other Issues on Which Hamilton Parents Centre Have Had a Voice

While Hamilton Parents Centre advocated and lobbied for some very specific issues, they have also been vocal about other issues involving the family. Their commitment to addressing all aspects of the family has been demonstrated through their contribution to topical debates. For example, in 1969 Elsa Wood wrote to thank Hamilton Parents Centre members for their donations to the Heart Foundation Appeal.

The *Adoption of Children Act 1955* effectively closed up adoption, denying adopted children and birth parents access to identifying information. Politician Jonathon Hunt lobbied to introduce a new Bill that would allow adoptees and birth parents access to identifying information subject to the adoptee having reached 20 years of age. Hamilton Parents Centre joined Mr Hunt in his campaign in 1979, inviting him to speak on the issue, and in 1980 Mr Hunt addressed a Hamilton Parents Centre meeting on the topic. The Adult Adoption Information Act 1985 finally gave adopted persons and their birth

parents rights of access to this identifying information subject to provisions for counselling, and – for historical adoptions – consent.

Conferences organised by Parents Centres across New Zealand frequently invited speakers who spoke to poignant and sometimes also topical issues. For example, the Annual Conference in 1978 was attended by David Lange, then a Member of Parliament, who spoke about his first child being stillborn. He made an important point about the rights of “consumers” needing to be upheld in hospitals.¹²⁸

Hamilton Parents Centre demonstrated a commitment to “family-friendly communities” in 1996 in a pushchair parade down Victoria Street Hamilton. Hamilton Parents Centre spokesperson, Christine Cave told reporters that they were trying to “draw attention to how communities can be made more user-friendly for families”.¹²⁹ The parade was part of a nationwide demonstration, drawing attention to the lack of wheelchair and pushchair access in public areas.

In 1972 a day-old baby was thrown into the Waikato River from a Hamilton bridge. The police were making inquiries to determine who the mother of the baby was and were treating the death as a homicide. Hamilton Parents Centre’s Secretary, Mrs. Eleanor Gibb, and President, Mrs Lynne McCleery, wrote a letter to *The Waikato Times* drawing attention to wider issues around the death. Writing on behalf of Hamilton Parents Centre they said that they were “deeply concerned about the sensational reporting ... of the tragic discovery of the body of a baby in the Waikato river ...”. They felt that “... too much emphasis has been placed on this being a homicide inquiry, when in reality the police are looking for a mother who has a real need for medical care and sympathetic and understanding counselling ...”¹³⁰

Such a position prompted an angered response from some readers. Mrs P.R. Hond responded by saying “... The name Hamilton Parents Centre sounds quite impressive but this outburst, so emotional and immature, does nothing to enhance such an impression. The Centre’s members appear to have everything cut and dried, as to the circumstances of the tragedy ... whether the Parents Centre like it or not, this is homicide...”¹³¹

Hamilton Parents Centre’s position on this tragedy was illustrative of an organisation that sought to go beyond immediate issues – in this case, the harming of one’s child – to the deeper roots of many tragedies, postnatal depression. In this way, Hamilton Parents Centre strived to raise awareness of the potential extent of postnatal depression and stressed the need to support sufferers of the disorder to minimise the risk of such a horrific tragedy occurring again. While this position challenged the perceptions of many local residents, it also carved a path to discussion and debate on an issue that reflects the emotional experiences of many mothers and is still topical today.

Issues Hamilton Parents Centre has promoted in its advocacy role have not always been regarded entirely positively either by institutions and professionals or indeed by members of the public. The articulated objectives and principles of Parents Centres provide guidelines for advocacy, but there remains the vital role of particular

individuals in particular times, places and contexts. The fact that Hamilton Parents Centre has survived and developed throughout its now quite long history without a major internal dispute or organisational split shows that its advocacy has remained centred on its core values, objectives and principles.

Chapter Four: Services & Contributions to the Community

Hamilton Parents Centre, and indeed the whole Parents Centres movement in New Zealand, can be understood as beginning with the identification of a quite specific need: antenatal preparation that enabled women to understand and participate in childbirth (and from the perspective of many of the pregnant women who attended, antenatal preparation that offered them some chance of minimising and managing the pain which they anticipated would be part of labour and delivery). This need was both attributed to pregnant women by Parents Centre activists and felt by pregnant women themselves. This was a specific service-delivery goal for both the early Parents Centre activists and the women who came to those early classes.

However it was inherently unlikely that Parents Centres would remain simply specialised service delivery adjuncts to the medicalised processes which surrounded pregnancy and childbirth in New Zealand at that time. Childbirth had in earlier times (and across the Western world) been relocated from home to hospital, and from midwife to doctor, and medicalised so that while on the one hand maternal and infant mortality were eventually and significantly reduced, on the other hand the management of the labour and delivery, and increasingly both the antenatal and the post-partum periods, was taken out of the hands of the women concerned and their immediate support group (probably other women in earlier times, partners / husbands in more recent times), with women becoming “cases” or even identified only by their clinical conditions.

Labour and childbirth, even when medicalised, are not themselves diseases or physiological trauma although they may represent periods of increased risk of adverse events and medical problems. The interests of clinical personnel in labour and childbirth conditions and requirements which they think or feel are optimum for their clinical practices are unlikely to align completely with the interests of women and their partners and significant others in a positive labour and childbirth experience. Normative clinical practices of much of the period of Hamilton Parents Centre’s service delivery, such as the position adopted for childbirth itself and associated practices such as pubic shaving and the administration of an enema, not to mention the level of information provided and the extent to which informed decision-making is made a reality, impact significantly on the labour and childbirth experience.

Thus in preparing women at antenatal classes for labour and childbirth Hamilton Parents Centre – and all the others – faced some quite stark choices. Did they prepare women for whatever the local conditions were (and these varied across New Zealand according to many factors, often quite personal factors such as the values and attitudes of key medical personnel), or did they prepare women for what was thought to be possible and at least somewhat better were the medical and associated personnel to be agreeable and cooperate? And if such agreement and cooperation was not forthcoming, was Hamilton Parents Centre to engage in advocacy, either for individuals / couples or for a whole category of health and medical service users? And if they did so, what were likely to be the short-term consequences for women who attended their antenatal

classes and identified themselves as such, as likely they would, deliberately or otherwise, to medical and other personnel who might not be in sympathy with Hamilton Parents Centre's – and its members' – values and goals?

Remembering the ecological approach, we must also consider the society and culture in which Hamilton Parents Centre operated. While Hamilton as a community and especially its voluntary and community-based social service sector could be remarkably radical, contrary to perceptions of the city by those in other larger centres, there was still the overarching New Zealand culture, the norms of the times, in regard for example to the roles of men and women, the power of the professions and what was right and proper. Hamilton Parents Centre needed to express the values and goals of those committee members and office-holders who gave it much time and energy – and as activists they would tend to be more “radical” according to the standards of the time and place – but without alienating the women (and perhaps especially their partners) for whom the antenatal classes and other services were intended.

Hamilton Parents Centre's service delivery thus could not be designed, planned and delivered in isolation from its advocacy role. Each would unavoidably impact on the other. Thus in telling the story of its changing pattern of service delivery over the decades the interaction with the advocacy role and the broader social and cultural context of the Hamilton community and New Zealand society must always be kept in mind.

Courses

The antenatal training provided by June Mackwell starting in 1957 was a first for the city of Hamilton and the Waikato region. The classes were initially small in scale and held in the Littlewoods' living-room, but they soon outgrew the Littlewoods' house and with an average attendance of 9 members per week were held in the Old Folks Hall, Clarence Street. There were two classes per week on Wednesday mornings with the first at 9.45 a.m. for first time expectant mothers, and the second at 10:30 a.m. for mothers with children. Morning tea was provided between classes to promote interaction amongst the groups. At this early stage fathers were not present at antenatal classes but were invited to come along in the evening with their wives to listen to Grantly Dick-Read records¹³².

The implication here is that Hamilton Parents Centre was oriented to attracting and serving parents from traditional nuclear families, that is married couples. However unmarried mothers were not excluded from Hamilton Parents Centre courses, and were in fact involved in small numbers even in the earliest stages. By 1976 antenatal classes “aim[ed] to help the couple to be physically and emotionally prepared for the changes occurring during pregnancy and labour, so that they may be able to look forward with confidence to a satisfying experience in labour”.¹³³ The broad purpose of Hamilton Parents Centre meant that services were not going to be limited to antenatal classes. As membership grew there was scope for additional parenting-related courses and services. Antenatal class members were provided with a comprehensive antenatal book beginning with a section outlining physiotherapy, bottle-feeding and breastfeeding, hospital confinement, sex and contraception, and parenting.¹³⁴ Open meetings were also

a feature of the eight-week antenatal courses. In 1971 these were held at the end of each course. The meetings were open to the public and attracted a wide range of speakers “who were experts in their fields”.¹³⁵ In 1992 trained childbirth educators were employed to run the antenatal courses.

Postnatal mornings encouraged antenatal groups to keep in contact by meeting on a regular basis. Fay Foreman credits the initiative of postnatal mornings and the encouragement given to mothers to Jane Ritchie:

“Jane was wonderful in that area ... she also ran play groups for new mothers ... You just went along and took your child, if your child needed attention [you] attended to that, otherwise you sat and had a coffee and talked to the other mums”.¹³⁶

Jane Ritchie had identified a crucial need for support for mothers and this was met through postnatal morning meetings. These mornings evolved into a postnatal course. The purpose of postnatal courses was to provide support for new mothers. These forums allowed mothers to express any concerns they may have felt in regard to their children or their parenting role. The postnatal morning became formalised as a three session course in 1979.

Concerned with assisting parents beyond the early stages of parenthood, Hamilton Parents Centre also instigated courses for the parents of toddlers. These courses aimed to provide a forum for discussion between parents of toddlers and the sharing of their parenting experiences. Denise Irvine recalled that the motivation behind initiating the toddlers course was that parents were feeling isolated again after the supportive experience of antenatal and postnatal courses.

“The formalised courses for toddlers ... started in the 1970s or thereabout, where up until then the big push had been the antenatal classes, and then a lot of people began to say that ‘we feel being cut loose, it’s bloody hard out there and what do we do next?’ And the toddlers courses probably grew out of those sorts of comments and there were two or three really good women who helped start those and the ongoing support amongst the people you met when we went for morning tea or coffee and things”.¹³⁷

Another course, “Tinies-to-Tots”, was later introduced to assist parents with pre-toddler children aged between 4 and 16 months. In 1995 thirty mothers attended this four week day-time course where they were introduced to topics relevant to the particular stage of childhood development, such as physical and mental development, the value of play, safety and homeopathy, and child illness and nutrition.¹³⁸

As parenting needs were more widely recognised the scope of the Hamilton Parents Centre programme of courses was adapted to meet new demands. An adoption course was one example of an emergent need being met by a specialist course. The course covered some of the same ground as the antenatal course, aiming “to give these

[adoptive] parents the opportunity to meet and share their experiences in the problems that may arise”¹³⁹ The adoption course was first offered in the early 1970s and reflected the need for such a service at a time when adoption was a much more widespread practice than it is today. An adoption support group also began to operate offering additional support for adoptive parents.¹⁴⁰ In 1974, Hamilton Parent Centre welcomed a couple with disabilities (severely restricted stature and cerebral palsy) into their adoption course. The reception the couple had first received when they made an application to adopt a child was very negative. Upon coming to Hamilton the couple found a positive and supportive environment. The husband said “we were treated as equals and told of the adoption course offered by the Hamilton Parents Centre”.¹⁴¹ They completed the adoption course and were believed to be the first couple in New Zealand with such disabilities to adopt a child.¹⁴²

In time other new courses were developed to meet parents’ needs. During 1989 three new courses – Music, Positive Parenting and New Baby – were started. The music course was developed for parents and children to enjoy music together. Donna Behl helped set up the Music group’s use of autoharps and Pippa Wright compiled the music, with the mornings being held at committee members’ homes. The course became hugely popular.¹⁴³ Positive Parenting was a course aimed at encouraging “parents to make their own decisions confidently”. This course included sessions on children misbehaving, communication and encouraging responsibility. The New Baby course was “designed to give parents of new babies ideas and support”.¹⁴⁴

Venues

A place to conduct classes has sometimes been an elusive goal for Hamilton Parents Centre. As previously mentioned the classes soon outgrew Eileen Littlewood’s home so the classes moved from there to the Old Folks Hall in Clarence Street. With the antenatal exercises being conducted on the floor, a clean environment was needed. Elsa Wood recalls committee members having to “scrub the floors and generally tidy up” the Old Folks Hall “before the mothers came”.¹⁴⁵ The 1961 *Annual Report* noted that the “Old Folks’ Committee... [had] generously decided to allow us the use of the hall for classes, free of charge”. In February 1966 Hamilton Parents Centre began using facilities at the Hamilton Old Boys’ Rugby Football Club. However, this was only to be a temporary arrangement as there were “[p]roblems of staffing and satisfactorily accommodating the large number of children in the crèche [which] were so impossible that the committee immediately began investigating [the] possibilities of holding night classes.”¹⁴⁶ Elsa Wood recollected that ...

“[a]fter some months I said ‘I do wish we could have evening classes so that the fathers could really belong’. One of our Committee girls [sic] was also on the [School] Committee for Hillcrest Primary School, and received permission for us to use two or three rooms, one for the men for the first half of the evening and the others for whatever exercises there were, and the speaker”.¹⁴⁷

The shift to Hillcrest Normal School occurred during June 1966 signalled an important change in the focus of Hamilton Parents Centre as it was seen as making men's involvement in antenatal classes possible for the first time. Elsa Wood "whooped for joy" when they got the School as a venue because it was a "real *Parents Centre* at last".¹⁴⁸ Now the classes could operate at night and the men who had previously and unintentionally been excluded because of their daytime paid work commitments could attend with their partners.

In 1997 a number of parenting organisations coalesced to provide their services from a single venue called Parents Place. A one-year lease was taken out on premises at 113 Rostrevor Street where Hamilton Parents Centre combined with Waikato Home Birth Association, New Zealand College of Midwives, New Mothers Support Group and the La Leché League to provide a "one-stop shop for pregnancy, birthing and parenting support". The premises were officially opened by the National MP Simon Upton in April the following year.¹⁴⁹

More suitable and permanent facilities became available the following year through a lease provided by the Waikato Community Trust of a central city house at 4 Little London Lane that was renovated to cater for the needs of the combined Parents Place groups. These "groups have now pooled resources and ... use the house on a booking basis, with the facility being managed through the Parents Place Charitable Trust. The four bedrooms have been turned into offices, meeting and resource rooms, with the lounge a communal area"¹⁵⁰ In 2003 Hamilton Parents Centre is on the move again with new premises in Boundary Road also owned by the Waikato Community Trust being developed in readiness for Parents Place because the Trust needs the office space at 4 Little London Lane. The Hamilton Parents Centre lease provided that the Trust would find alternative accommodation if Parents Place were required to leave 4 Little London Lane.

School visits

Several Hamilton schools were visited by Hamilton Parents Centre for the purpose of presenting seminars or showing films. Elsa Wood remembers going to high schools in the Hamilton area to show films about the child in separation issue. Educating potential parents about the effects of separating a baby from its mother, she hoped, would "get a mother really hooked on her baby".¹⁵¹

One seminar series was held at Melville High School with seminars titled Friendships, Know yourself, Bridging the generation gap, Kids and careers, What's involved in having children? and Independence. A programme called Education for Living was held at Hamilton Girls' High School. It included the films *Kate* and *John*, and seminars entitled Adult Relationships, Sex and Contraception, Antenatal, Child Development and Marriage¹⁵². *Kate* and *John* were shown at other high schools to demonstrate "the dangers of maternal deprivation".¹⁵³

The Toy Library

The toy library initiative was the result of Hamilton Parents Centre's Karen Collins "seeing the need for this facility"¹⁵⁴. The Toy Library was opened on 19 October 1996 at the Hillcrest Plunket Rooms in Masters Avenue with a stock of 290 toys by the end of the year. Hamilton Parents Centre provided an initial \$8000 to help get the service off the ground, with another \$9000 coming from grants and \$1069 being directly fundraised¹⁵⁵. The Toy Library enabled parents to borrow toys for up to two weeks saving the "financial outlay" incurred by keeping up with the different toys required at different stages of a child's development.¹⁵⁶

Men's involvement

Parents Centre was aware of the relevance of husbands, the future fathers, to the organisation's goals, but both the kiwi culture of the earlier years and some practical issues and priorities meant they were not especially salient in either the organisation or its pioneering antenatal programmes.

One practical problem arose from the gendered pattern of paid work at the time when the Parents Centre movement was getting going: men's involvement in antenatal and other classes held during the day was restricted by the difficulty of taking time off from their paid employment. Some evening events were held, which husbands could attend, and at these meetings vinyl 33-r.p.m. records of talks by British and other experts were played and parenting-related issues were discussed. A film about childbirth provided by the Federation was shown at one of these evening sessions during Elsa Wood's time as President. Elsa picks up the story here:

"There was nothing for the men at all in our courses before we changed to evening classes, so we arranged to get a birth film from Wellington, from Federation, and show it once during the course. Sometimes they came to our place, and we showed them the birth film. Well, the first time we tried it out they were all at our home, and we heard a sort of dull thud and one of these big brawny six-footers had keeled over. Well you know that was a terrible introduction to Parents Centre and childbirth ...".¹⁵⁷

Elsa Wood also noted that initially in the early days men were reluctant to participate, which was dealt with by a few quiet words from one of Hamilton Parents Centre's male members:

"Well, this was really very amusing because most of these fathers-to-be came along terribly reluctantly, as if they'd been dragged by their ears and seeing all these bulging [women]! On the first night of each course, the men went away with a Mr Cohen¹⁵⁸... and we were never, ever, told what he said to them. After their talk they came back different people and we were dying to know because they came back with their shoulders back [saying] 'we're going to do our bit here' and they weren't slinking away as if they were never coming back here again ... I'd love to know what he did tell them".¹⁵⁹

What seemed like a natural process to women because of the demystification process that Parents Centre provided was a surprising revelation to some of the fathers. The shift of premises to Hillcrest Normal School in 1966 allowed the more direct involvement of men in antenatal training for the first time because evening classes were much easier to provide, thus providing basic childbirth education for men where there had previously been none. Men soon began attending evening antenatal courses on a more regular basis, and this led on to other activities, as Fay Foreman remembers:

“[W]e developed awareness that if you’re experiencing birth for the first time, you might well forget things. The partner could [thus] be very supportive and helpful. And then we began to think, yes, there are lots of other things [such as] budgeting, sex during pregnancy [and] following the birth, there are issues of how does a couple accommodate the new life and how is it going to effect their relationship so [men’s involvement] ... evolved as we evolved”.¹⁶⁰

Men’s increasing involvement brought new perspectives to the organisation. It expanded the brief of Hamilton Parents Centre in two ways: courses could be more comprehensive, as for example relationship issues could be discussed, and men brought with them some other skills useful to the organisation. David Swain was the first man elected to Hamilton Parents Centre’s committee, during the early 1970s, demonstrating increased men’s involvement in the organisation’s structure.¹⁶¹ He was however quoted in one of the newsletters at the time as having said “In Parents Centre we have a sense of having arrived. The trouble is that when you have arrived, you have stopped travelling”.¹⁶² The involvement of men also both signalled and encouraged a positive change in gendered attitudes towards childbirth, child-rearing and parenting. Hamilton Parents Centre valued and promoted the roles of both parents as important in children’s upbringing. Denise Irvine remembers that “[m]en’s involvement was huge” making it “one of the things ... [she] really loved about Hamilton Parents Centre ... [because it] really did encourage and nurture the father’s role”.¹⁶³

The recognition of men’s roles in parenting was quite a shift away from more traditional and conservative perspectives on “the family” where many functions of parenting were generally seen as the more or less exclusive responsibility of the wife and mother. Impressed at the time by the inclusive Parents Centre approach that did not alienate men from the parenting process, Denise Irvine commented that it “was so heartening to see there was an organisation that men were very much involved in. There were male lecturers, there was always a night called Fathers Are Parents Too, which was a men-only session and they loved it”.¹⁶⁴

By the 1980s men were expected to attend antenatal courses with their partners as a key part of the process, in support of their partner, and Donna Behl remembers there being more men on Parents Centre committees in the 1980s than at any previous period. John Matheson was involved in creating a men’s group which had its own activities, which included John writing a feasibility study for Hamilton Parents Centre getting its own premises, and providing them with “their own interests to pursue at Parents Centre”.¹⁶⁵

As one of the few men on the Committee John Matheson recalls another function he performed:

“I used to give a talk where the blokes would all go off and I would talk to them. The key thing I would say to them was ‘look, realise that your partner here is going to develop some very powerful links that you’re not going to be a part of’ and I would tell them that ‘in the course of the next 8-12 weeks (on the course) to try and find somebody else that you can, in three months time, ring up and say is your wife bloody doing this?’ So what you needed to find was somebody you could talk to, and just form a link that doesn’t need to be anything else but between you two, and if you can make it wider than that, that’s fantastic but I doubt whether that will happen, but if you can find one other person that you can link to, that will be great. Because your partner’s going to have this amazing group of people and you are going to be left out of this”.¹⁶⁶

Some current members reported that their husbands have formed social bonds with other members’ husbands through playing golf and other activities like going go-carting. While men’s involvement has been and is encouraged, their participation in Parents Centre courses has been variable. Most partners attend the antenatal and parenting courses but there is variable, sometimes minimal, involvement beyond these core areas. Donna Behl has noted¹⁶⁷ that the male partners of women involved in Hamilton Parents Centre were generally an exception to this pattern, being particularly supportive at social events and major occasions such as the Teddy Bears’ Picnic.

In 2003 Steve Gore, a staff member at the Federation office in Wellington, circulated a discussion and consultative paper¹⁶⁸ which asked a question that could have been asked any time in the last 50 years and still needs to be asked:

“I attended my first PCNZ conference last year [2002]. Amidst the hundreds of women there were two male Board members, two men in founding father capacities and myself, a staff member. With something like 10% of men being primary care givers in households, we should expect at least that many to be filling our ranks. Why are they not there?”

He proposed finding out whether what Parents Centres provide for men is what they are thought to need or (if it is different) what they want:

“We know our child birth education is excellent. Now we need to find out whether it is what men want and need weeks away from becoming a father”.

Social Events, Reunions and Jubilee Celebrations

Social events such as class and annual reunions were an important forum for members to maintain social contact with one another, and to renew old acquaintances. For a time the reunions were conducted in the form of garden parties at the residence of Fay and Jon Foreman, with attendance growing to the point where, by the late 1960s, two parties were needed to cater to the large numbers attending.¹⁶⁹ These events provided the

opportunity “to meet those on your course, their children and your committee.”¹⁷⁰ During the 1970s the location for these changed, with the reunions being held at various venues such as the St Andrews Church Centre, Te Aroha Street¹⁷¹ or the Methodist Centre, London Street.¹⁷² A variety of activities were available to keep members occupied at the reunions including cake-stalls, children’s product displays and raffles.

Jubilee celebrations of Hamilton Parents Centre were important occasions where present and past members could share their memories and experiences of being involved with the organisation. A dinner was held on 1 September 1982 at the Ferrybank Lounge, Grantham Street to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the founding of Hamilton Parents Centre. Eileen Littlewood spoke about the foundations of Hamilton Parents Centre and cut the cake with June Mackwell. Hamilton Parents Centre celebrated the golden jubilee of Parents Centre in New Zealand on Saturday 14 September 2002 an event that was widely feted and advertised through the media. During the day an open day with an afternoon tea was held at Parents Place, 4 Little London Lane, where previous and current members could meet to revisit the achievements of Hamilton Parents Centre (with memories jogged by a display of original Minute Books, scrap books, photographs and Parents Centre publications). The afternoon tea was in classic ‘50s style, with a proper tea service, sponge cake, “something buttered”, shortbread and even a table cloth.

The same evening a Jubilee Dinner was held at the Quality Inn Hotel with the key-note speaker being Elsa Wood. The 50th celebrations were also the catalyst for this sociological history with a call going out to those present for material and recollections to contribute to a historical account.

Beyond the classes: the importance of social links

Although the overt and explicit purposes of Parents Centres and other community-based social services such as La Leché League, Playcentre and Marriage Guidance were to provide social services, advocacy and the like, it is also observable in all of these organisations where volunteers serve so professionally that what is in it for the volunteers is not simply the opportunity for altruism (although that is important). What is also important includes the building of confidence and self-esteem, the development of skills – and social links and bonds. This last-listed benefit has been a particular strength of Hamilton Parents Centre and the Parents Centre movement. The organisation goes well beyond being just a service provider by making a forum available where their members can come together to learn the principles of parenting, and in doing so Hamilton Parents Centre has provided a supportive environment where members could “gain confidence in themselves” through the mutual support of other parents, and where open discussion could be held about “matters of common interest”¹⁷³. Out of such activities friendship and social networks are built.

Hamilton Parents Centre was a place where people have made some life-long friends. Judy Pickard, who moved to Hamilton from Invercargill, recalls the “pleasant introduction to the city” she received by being a part of Hamilton Parents Centre,

making friends including Fay Foreman, Elsa Wood and Eileen Littlewood, and “lots of others too”.¹⁷⁴ The need to establish social networks was well recognised in Hamilton where during much of the earlier period of Hamilton Parents Centre significant portions of the population were in Hamilton as a stepping stone to a larger city. Another former member remembers the isolation she experienced upon moving to Hamilton, where joining Hamilton Parents Centre meant making “so many friends because you meet so many like-minded people”. She found that “suddenly ... [she] didn’t have to hang out at the supermarket” to make friends.¹⁷⁵

The social links made were important for class members as well as those on the Committee. Part of the antenatal follow-up programme would involve morning teas or other forums where classmates could get together to socialise. One member recalled how the frequency of these meetings diminished over time, but also valued long-term friendships that had been made as the group met for fourteen years.¹⁷⁶

A platform for future paid and community work

Donna Behl¹⁷⁷ recalls Hamilton Parents Centre committee members having opportunities to represent parents on other bodies and organisations in the wider community, including the National Council of Women and Hamilton City Council consultative groups.

The introduction of a Leadership Certificate through the Federation enabled Parents Centre committee members to gain valuable skills, knowledge and experience related to the leadership of groups, for example in group facilitation, adult learning theory, conflict resolution and administration. Donna Behl notes¹⁷⁸ that a number of women who gained the Leadership Certificate have subsequently moved into leadership roles in their careers.

In many individual cases Hamilton Parents Centre has provided another kind of pathway along which members have moved into other community-focussed organisations or initiatives and the wider paid workforce, political activities and the like. Fay Foreman is an example of such a pathway. After her initial involvement with Hamilton Parents Centre (and the Family Planning Association) she moved on to be a tutor with Marriage Guidance, then to the University of Waikato where she trained as a clinical psychologist. David Swain remembers a Women’s Expo at Claudelands some time in the 1980s at which he noticed, from photographic displays at various stalls, that women who had been involved in Parents Centre, La Leché League, Marriage Guidance and the like had moved to organisations such as the Women’s Electoral Lobby and Hamilton Feminists, with broader agendas and wider arenas of activity but essentially similar values. As Fay Foreman has said, “you had your infancy in parenthood as it were and that gives you the confidence and whatever it is you need to further advance yourself or move on”.¹⁷⁹

Chapter Five: Hamilton Parents Centre in Context & in Perspective

One way of looking at Hamilton Parents Centre and making sense of its stories is to adapt the ecological perspective which has worked well for the early childhood area and human development¹⁸⁰, thinking in terms of a core area and several successively larger concentric areas surrounding it, with the story of Hamilton Parents Centre moving from the centre outwards. At the centre is Hamilton Parents Centre itself and the people who have served as committee members, office-holders, speakers and facilitators. In the immediately surrounding space are those people, groups and organisations that have been specifically and directly affected by Hamilton Parents Centre's services and advocacy. The next larger surrounding space, still centred on the organisation, is more diverse: people, organisations and institutions with which Hamilton Parents Centre has had contact but where the organisation's influence has been indirect or more general. Larger again is the outer space, so to speak, which encompasses New Zealand society and its cultures, our values and notions and social constructs, the larger ideological and social structures we construct. At this level Hamilton Parents Centre is now a much smaller part of a much larger world, but especially as part of the Federation it still has influence.

We can think in terms of relationships, links and influences both within these several concentric spaces and between adjacent ones, and we can envisage the links working and the influences flowing both ways. Hamilton Parents Centre has been both illustrative of its times and place and a shaping influence on those times and that place.

The inner area is a story of people, their relationships and interactions, the friendships made and roles negotiated. Continuity, succession management and turnover have always been features of successful voluntary and community-based organisations, and Hamilton Parents Centre has not been exceptional in these respects. The minutes of annual general meetings lie in the archives but they are formal documents and do not capture let alone disclose the dynamics of such meetings. Much is tacitly understood as the faithful file into the AGM venue: who is available for which position, what vacancies remain, whether – possible but unlikely – there is competition for a position and if so is it personal or does it reflect a real choice for the organisation. Sometimes the choreography of a meeting is obvious to the careful observer – the quiet word, the slips of paper being distributed discretely with suggested nominations from the floor.

The general pattern for voluntary and community-based organisations, especially those linked to the family lifecycle¹⁸¹, is turnover, as the bulk of committee members and office-holders move through a series of community contributions and commitments which reflect their own families' progress from formation to dissolution¹⁸². The turnover for any specific organisation related to a particular phase of the family life cycle which is implicit in such patterns requires some succession management: recruitment, socialisation, progression, succession – and then withdrawal. Thus do organisations sustain themselves and successive generations participate in them.

Continuity is achieved in two ways. Where there is sufficient overlapping of individuals' service with an organisation it is very likely that at any given time a cross-section of committee members and office-holders will have various degrees of institutional knowledge and relevant skills, but with any successful organisation there are also likely to be some individuals who choose (or are persuaded) to have ongoing roles which far exceed any period in which they or their families (at least until there are grandchildren) might benefit directly from the organisation's services and advocacy. A common pathway for such key individuals, a number of whom feature in this study and in the Federation's own history¹⁸³, is "upwards" through the organisation – in the case of Parents Centres, to important Federation roles and finally to emeritus status, the "old identities" who are honoured but not always recognised personally by the current activists at national annual conferences and other such occasions.

Alongside and also permeating the "official" organisational inner circle there are the informal relationships and roles, of which simple friendship is perhaps the most common and the most salient. Hamilton during at least the earlier decades of Hamilton Parents Centre was, for a proportion of the middle class so well represented in the organisation, another stopping-place on the husband and father's career path. As such it could be a lonely place for the wife and mother until she made connections, and the most accessible and acceptable connections were those which centred on the family, which meant the children and the domestic world. However such connections were also potentially the first steps on another pathway, one in which self-confidence, skills and the perception of possibilities were all enhanced, pathways which could lead to organisations and activities at greater and greater removes from the domestic – for example, organisations with more general and political – even, more radical – agendas such as the Women's Electoral Lobby, Hamilton Feminists, the United Women's Conventions, and so forth. It is worth noting, however, that the agendas of these women's organisations often linked back to the domestic world but in terms of changes in the public domain of policies, laws and public institutions.

The same self-confidence, skills and perception of possibilities could also make possible an equally significant but more individual pathway, back into the paid workforce, where both the acquired assets and "the network" could be helpful. The growing participation of married women with dependent children in the paid workforce has been, over the fifty years to date of the life of Hamilton Parents Centre, significant in at least two ways. It both caused and reflected major social and political changes in New Zealand society often captured in the phrase "the changing roles of women" and it drastically changed organisations such as Parents Centres because the supply of women volunteers – women at home, not participating in the paid workforce, diminished considerably and in due course the organisations to which they contributed so much had to change from being voluntary and community-based to being corporate in structure with paid employees¹⁸⁴.

The next concentric space mentioned in the introduction was that which surrounds the inner space, still centred on the organisation but more diverse, comprising people, organisations and institutions with which Hamilton Parents Centre has or has had direct contact but where the organisation's influence has been indirect or more general. These

fall into two broad groups: cognate or “sister” organisations, and public institutions. Hamilton Parents Centre was one of a group of broadly similar organisations, and it is notable that many of its founders were also, before or afterwards, active in these cognate organisations, such as the Family Planning Association, Marriage Guidance (later Relationship Services), La Leché League, Playcentre and so forth. Each had a particular focus, and there was at least in Hamilton and for the most part relatively little competition among them. Three exceptions to this broad harmony could perhaps at times be discerned: where there were ideological differences (e.g. between secular and religious bodies apparently offering similar services but with different values or emphases); where – in the later times – similar Maori organisations emerged; and where – though it was often tacit – there was competition for scarce resources such as funding and personnel. It is the “old identity” author’s recollection that not only did some of the same people turn up over the years in various community organisations, they were also to be seen networking (as we now call it – then we called it chatting) at chamber music recitals and renewing old acquaintance at protest and advocacy events from the 1981 Springbok tour Hamilton match to homosexual law reform.

A third and larger space was also identified in the introduction above, one which encompasses New Zealand society and its cultures, our values and notions, our social constructs – the larger ideological and social structures we construct. What difference did Hamilton Parents Centre itself make at this level? Here we should look first at the role of Hamilton Parents Centre within the Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres Inc., both through the national office and by way of various Federation-level provisions such as the *Bulletin* and its successors. Second we should consider whether local accomplishments – for example, in relation to enabling parents to be with their children in hospital – were inspirations or examples successfully quoted and used elsewhere to achieve similar goals. And finally we should ask whether Hamilton Parents Centre itself made a specific impact at national level.

We have told some of the stories of Hamilton Parents Centre organised chronologically in overlapping phases emphasising particular aspects of its activities and contribution to the Hamilton community, and we have selected and presented thematic accounts of its main roles – service delivery and advocacy / community initiatives. It remains finally for us to return to Hamilton Parents Centre in its changing context, to get the details in perspective, and to assess the extent to which it has shaped our present community and social policies in its areas of concern – parents and their children.

Hamilton Parents Centre, and all the other Centres, were not, are not, and very likely never could be all things to all parents. The array of antenatal, postnatal and early childhood services and resources Parents Centres offer have never reached more than a small proportion of prospective and new parents, despite a desire frequently expressed to move beyond the perhaps predominantly better-educated middle class walks of life (overseas called social classes) represented in its classes and coffee groups. However as the stories of Hamilton Parents Centre over fifty years show, this doesn’t matter. Hamilton Parents Centre, working with sympathetic health professionals and others, saw its antenatal education “taken over” by public institutions better-resourced to

deliver them, sometimes in public-community partnerships. What always mattered to the Parents Centre activists was that all prospective and new parents should benefit from the best possible preparation for childbirth and parenthood.

This is where the service delivery and the advocacy intersect, because if “handing over” services to public institutions achieved Parents Centre goals in a slightly subversive way, advocacy achieved related goals up front (although not without subtlety on occasions). Public institutions’ policies and health professionals’ practices around childbirth and the transition to parenthood were changed. Hamilton Parents Centre’s active membership may never have comprised a representative sample of the Hamilton population, but much of what the Centre achieved did benefit the whole population.

In more recent years the power of professionals and public institutions has been reduced *viz-a-viz* “clients”, “consumers” and “the community”. The legislation which reformed family law in the early 1980s and introduced family group conferences for both care and protection and youth justice areas at the end of the 1980s marked this change in the balance of power. It is important to remember that for the first two or three decades of the life of Hamilton Parents Centre the social policy environment was significantly different from that which increasingly prevailed from the 1990s onwards – even if the late 1980s and 1990s saw tremendous damage to our social fabric in the name of certain economic ideologies. In the early decades public institutions and professionals were dominant; in the later decades the balance of power was shifting and previously excluded constituencies were increasingly finding first their voice and then their power.

What Hamilton Parents Centre means to those who have been involved in it, those whose lives it has touched and the wider community is fourfold:

it has provided a changing repertoire of services for prospective and current parents;

it has – often successfully – advocated change in those institutions and services which are especially relevant to parents and children;

it has provided opportunities for women to move – if and when they choose to do so – beyond the circumscribed home environment into the paid workforce and the wider community; and

it has enabled (especially) women to create friendships and form networks during what could otherwise be the lonely geographically and socially mobile phases of intertwined family life and men’s occupational careers.

Over the past fifty years Hamilton Parents Centre has both shaped and epitomised many salient features of second-half twentieth-century urban New Zealand. As this book is completed the organisation is set to move to new premises and, no doubt, to move on to new services and advocacy for prospective and new parents and their children, who remain as always our most precious resource and the basis of our hopes for the future.

Appendix One: Presidents and Co-Administrators

Listed below are the presidents and co-administrators of Hamilton Parents Centre since its inception in 1957. The co-administrator role replaced that of the president during the late 1980s and early 1990s, permitting role-sharing. This reverted back to the role of president in 1993.

Presidents

1957 – 1962	Eileen Littlewood
1962 – 1963	Margaret Cleave
1963 – 1967	Elsa Wood
1967 – 1969	Fay Foreman
1969 – 1972	Lynne McCleery
1972 – 1975	Bev Wooley
1975 – 1977	Catherine Smith
1978 – 1979	Denise Irvine
1980 – 1981	Claire Dixon
1982 – 1983	Barbara Wadey
1984 – 1985	Jill Duncalfe
1986 - 1988	Melinda Ormond

Co-Administrators

1988-1989	Donna Behl, Barbara Brook and Moira Rowlands
1989-1990	Moira Rowlands and Rosanne Bjerring
1990-1991	Debbie Ford, Donna Behl and Janice Gulbransen
1991-1992	Karen Graham and Sue O'Keefe
1992-1993	Sue Johnston and Jody Rose

Presidents

1993 – 1995	Lindsay Geenty
1995 – 1996	Sue Addison
1996 – 1997	Gabrielle Appleton
1997 – 1998	Lindsay Geenty
1998 - 1999	Anne Harvey
1999 – 2000	Shilo Hayes
2000 – 2002	Lee Wilson
2002 –	Fiona Webber

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Endnotes

- ¹ We deliberately use the plural form here, because we do not think there is a single “story” of Hamilton Parents Centre, nor do we think that it is necessarily possible to integrate many diverse stories into a single narrative. Archive materials may not show, and key informants may not remember, the same organisation and events.
- ² The categories of “normal or typical”, “deviant or negative” and “extreme or experimental” case studies are described in G Sjoberg and R Nett, *A Methodology for Social Research* (New York: Harper and Row, 1968).
- ³ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Inaugural Meeting Minutes* (1957), p. 2.
- ⁴ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Inaugural Meeting Minutes* (1957), p. 1.
- ⁵ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Inaugural Meeting Minutes* (1957), pp. 3-4.
- ⁶ Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres, *Minutes of meeting held Saturday and Sunday 16th-17th November 1957 at 192 Tinakori Road, Wellington* (1957).
- ⁷ Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, Current Members Focus Group (2003). Coded Transcript, p. 7.
- ⁸ Helen Brew, *Report to Education Advisory Council on behalf of the Federation of Parents Centres*. Unpublished document, 1959.
- ⁹ “Rooming-in” is the practice of keeping the new-born infant with his or her mother in her room in hospital, rather than in a separate ward nursery.
- ¹⁰ Hamilton Parents Centre, *New Committee Members Pack* (Hamilton: Hamilton Parents Centre, 1998) [Hamilton Parents Centre archives].
- ¹¹ Parents Centre New Zealand, *Mission Statement*. Online: accessed 27 March 2004. http://www.parentscentre.org.nz/about_us/default.asp?dir=about&type=u
- ¹² Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Judy Pickard* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 2.
- ¹³ Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women: The Story of Parents Centre New Zealand* (Whatamongo Bay: Cape Catley, 1991), p. 36.
- ¹⁴ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Judy Pickard* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 2.
- ¹⁵ Hamilton Parents Centre, *President’s Annual report [for the] Year Ending December 31st 1966* (1967).
- ¹⁶ Hamilton Parents Centre, *19th Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 1975* (1976).
- ¹⁷ Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women: The Story of Parents Centre New Zealand* (Whatamongo Bay: Cape Catley, 1991), p. 100.
- ¹⁸ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Fay Foreman* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 6.
- ¹⁹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *18th Annual Report for the year ended 31st December 1974* (1974), p. 2.
- ²⁰ Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, *Former Members Focus Group* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 15.
- ²¹ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 6.

- ²² Hamilton Parents Centre, *14th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1970* (1971).
- ²³ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Donna Behl* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 4.
- ²⁴ M Gill, "Doctors, midwives at odds over care charges", *Waikato Times* 1 July 1996, p. 3.
- ²⁵ Z Khouri, "Maternity Comments Offend GPs", *Waikato Times*, 6 July 1996. p. 6.
- ²⁶ D Maplesden, "Views on GPs alienate group", *Waikato Times*, 4 July 1996. p. 6.
- ²⁷ Dorothy Gilson, *An investigation into battered women's shelters: feminist cooperatives or social service institutions: Case studies of Canada and New Zealand* (Hamilton: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Waikato, 2001).
- ²⁸ The sale of appropriately-treated lambskin fleeces was a fund-raising activity but also represented a view of the optimum sleeping environment for babies. Parents' and professionals' views of the use of lambskin fleeces have been varied and have changed over time.
- ²⁹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *New Committee Members Pack* (Hamilton: Hamilton Parents Centre, 1998) [Hamilton Parents Centre archives].
- ³⁰ Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, *Former Members Focus Group* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 5.
- ³¹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, August 1982.
- ³² Hamilton Parents Centre *38th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1994* (1995), p. 4.
- ³³ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, April 1983.
- ³⁴ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, November 1968.
- ³⁵ Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres (Inc.), *Annual report 1974-75* (1975).
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- ³⁷ The 2003 Conference was also to be in Hamilton.
- ³⁸ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, January 1980.
- ³⁹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, September 1973, p. 3
- ⁴⁰ S R McRobbie, Letter from the General Manager, Waikato Savings Bank, to Hamilton Parents Centre Secretary Betty Blair (18 July 1973).
- ⁴¹ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Denise Irvine* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 3.
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- ⁴³ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, March 1975.
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- ⁴⁵ Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, *Former Members Focus Group* (2003). Coded transcript, p. 9.
- ⁴⁶ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, October 1981, p. 2.
- ⁴⁷ Anonymous, "Baby book from centre", *The Waikato Times*, 26 September 1977.
- ⁴⁸ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, April 1983, p. 3.
- ⁴⁹ The revision was undertaken by Donna Behl and Debbie Ford (Hamilton Parents Centre) and Ruth Woodley and Jo Sewell (Christchurch Parents Centre).

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- ⁵⁰ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Donna Behl* (2003). Coded transcript, p.4.
- ⁵¹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *38th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1994* (1995), p. 4.
- ⁵² Hamilton Parents Centre, *39th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1995* (1996), p. 4
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- ⁵⁴ S Vermeren, "Teddy Bears' Picnic a great day", *The Waikato Times*, 23 February 1998, p.7
- ⁵⁵ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Third [1960] Annual Report (1961)*.
- ⁵⁶ Hamilton Parents Centre, *17th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1973* (1974), p. 3
- ⁵⁷ David A Swain, *Proposal to Locate and Operate the Federation Library at the University of Waikato Parent Education Archive* (1977).
- ⁵⁸ Hamilton Parents Centre, *[Fourth] [1961] Annual Report* (1962).
- ⁵⁹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, March 1976.
- ⁶⁰ Hamilton Parents Centre, *39th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1995* (1996), p. 4.
- ⁶¹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *40th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1996* (1997), p. 6.
- ⁶² Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women: The Story of the Parents Centre New Zealand*. (Queen Charlotte Sound: Cape Catley Ltd., 1990), pp. 129-30.
- ⁶³ Venetia Sherson was later to be Editor of *The Waikato Times* and Denise Irvine a senior journalist with the same newspaper.
- ⁶⁴ Parents Centres New Zealand, History, http://www.parentscentre.org.nz/about_us/history.asp?dir=about Online: accessed 11 August 2003.
- ⁶⁵ Barbara Wadey, "Waikato Sick Babies Trust", Unpublished letter (undated).
- ⁶⁶ Hamilton Parents Centre, *18th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1973* (1974), p. 3.
- ⁶⁷ See David A Swain, "Parenthood" in Peggy G Koopman-Boyden (editor), *Families in New Zealand Society* (Wellington: Methuen, 1978)
- ⁶⁸ The study was not subsequently replicated and the original questionnaires are currently scheduled to be destroyed in 2004.
- ⁶⁹ Hamilton Parents Centre (1995). *39th Annual report for the year ending December 31st 1995* (1996), p. 5.
- ⁷⁰ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, April 1979.
- ⁷¹ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, April 1981.
- ⁷² Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, October 1982.
- ⁷³ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, May 1982.
- ⁷⁴ Hamilton Parents Centre, *14th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1970* (1971).

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- ⁷⁵ It will not escape notice that it was assumed at the time (and was the case) that university staff would be men – even though there were some women academics on the staff of the University of Waikato at this time.
- ⁷⁶ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Newsletter*, June 1970, p. 3.
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- ⁷⁸ Anonymous, “City Library receives more books from the Parents Centre”, *Hamilton Press*, 17 January 1996.
- ⁷⁹ Dorothy Gilson’s thesis *An investigation into battered women’s shelters: feminist cooperatives or social service institutions: Case studies of Canada and New Zealand* (Hamilton: Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Waikato, 2001) illustrates and analyses very clearly the tensions and their outcomes for women’s refuges when government funding was provided but accountability and compliance with organisational requirements were simultaneously imposed.
- ⁸⁰ This organisation began as the New Zealand Society for the Preservation of the Health of Women and Children, then became the Royal New Zealand Society for the Health of Women and Children and more recently became the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society.
- ⁸¹ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded transcription, p. 3.
- ⁸² Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Fay Foreman* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 2.
- ⁸³ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Fay Foreman* (2003), Coded video transcription, p. 1.
- ⁸⁴ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Fay Foreman* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 2.
- ⁸⁵ Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women: The Story of Parents Centre New Zealand* (Whakatamongo Bay: Cape Catley, 1991)
- ⁸⁶ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Judy Pickard* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 1.
- ⁸⁷ *Nom de plume* “Medical Specialist”, Letter to the Editor (undated, unreferenced, in Hamilton Parents Centre archives).
- ⁸⁸ D MacCarthy, M Lindsay and I Morris, “Children in Hospital with Mothers”, *The Lancet*, 24 March 1962, pp603-608.
- ⁸⁹ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 4.
- ⁹⁰ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Judy Pickard* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 2.
- ⁹¹ Judy Pickard, *Report on Children in Hospital in New Zealand*, submitted to the Superintendent, Waikato [Hospital] (Hamilton: Federation of University Women, 1963), page 2.
- ⁹² Judy Pickard, *Children in Hospital* (undated, unreferenced, in Hamilton Parents Centre archives).
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- ⁹⁴ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 4.
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- ⁹⁶ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 4.
- ⁹⁷ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 4.
- ⁹⁸ Hamilton Parents Centre, *Achievements from 1957-1973*, attached to Annual Report (1973), p. 1.
- ⁹⁹ Anonymous, "Parents can live-in while kiddies sick", *The Waikato Times*, 17 September 1973.
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- ¹⁰³ Elsa Wood, Letter to Parents Centre, 11 August 1976.
- ¹⁰⁴ Anonymous, "Disturbing Attitude", Letter to the Editor (no publication details, 1970s)
- ¹⁰⁵ Alexandra Barratt, "Child-care view challenged", *The Waikato Times*, [no day date] March 1979.
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- ¹¹⁰ Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, *Current Members Focus Group* (2003).. Coded audio transcription, p. 4.
- ¹¹¹ Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, *Current Members Focus Group* (2003).. Coded audio transcription, p. 4.
- ¹¹² Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 2.
- ¹¹³ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 2.
- ¹¹⁴ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Elsa Wood* (2003), Coded audio transcription, p. 3.
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- ¹²² Rosemary Robertson, "Unit safe (for now)", *Parents Centre Bulletin*, No. 105, Autumn 1986, p. 19.
- ¹²³ New Zealand Women's Weekly (24.10.1983) 'To Fence or not to Fence – That is the Question'.
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- ¹⁵⁶ Hamilton Parents Centre, *39th Annual Report for the year ending December 31st 1995*, (1996), p. 6.
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- ¹⁵⁸ Note: David Cohen was a member of the Men's Advisory Group, see Hamilton Parents Centre, Newsletter April 1974. p. 3.
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- ¹⁶⁷ This comment and those in the immediately previous pages were made in feedback to the authors on a draft of this document.

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- ¹⁷⁷ This comment was made in feedback to the authors on a draft of this document.
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- ¹⁷⁹ Holly Snape and Blair Morgans, *In-depth Interview: Fay Foreman* (2003), Coded audio transcript, pp. 4-5.
- ¹⁸⁰ Urie Bronfenbrenner, *The Ecology of Human Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979).
- ¹⁸¹ Sociologists now prefer the term “family career” because this better reflects the intercontingency of family and other “careers” e.g. reproductive, employment and so forth and avoids the suggestion that much, except perhaps the birth of children (and that only once or perhaps twice), cycles in modern families.
- ¹⁸² One could imagine an ideal series of such contributions and commitments beginning with family planning, moving through antenatal education, breastfeeding support, learning through play and early childhood provisions, marriage guidance and relationship services, school boards and drug and alcohol services to grey power and voluntary euthanasia!
- ¹⁸³ Mary Dobbie, *The Trouble with Women: The Story of Parents Centre New Zealand* (Whatamongo Bay: Cape Catley, 1991)
- ¹⁸⁴ Some sister organisations dramatically demonstrate this transformation, such as Marriage Guidance becoming Relationship Services.

Notes on referencing:

All cited *Hamilton Parents Centre Sociological History* research material generated through focus groups and individual in-depth interviews, the recordings and transcripts of which are currently held by Hamilton Parents Centre, are shown as coded transcript documents for which the authors (and focus group facilitators / interviewers) are listed (this having been determined by random selection) in the order Blair Morgans and Holly Snape for focus groups and in the reverse order for individual in-depth interviews.

All Hamilton Parents Centre (and Federation of New Zealand Parents Centre) formal organisational records (such as annual reports and minutes) are shown by the organisation's name, the item's title, and the year in which it was created. These records are currently held by Hamilton Parents Centre. Other documents produced and distributed by Hamilton Parents Centre are shown in a format appropriate for published materials – as are published books and articles.

Some letters and articles published in *The Waikato Times* and other materials have been sourced from Hamilton Parents Centre archives and where publication details etc. were not recorded it was regrettably not possible within the resource constraints of this research project to spend time locating the details.

Hamilton Parents Centre Inc. has provided antenatal classes and other services to prospective and new parents for almost half a century while also being an active and effective advocate for parents and children. It has also enabled women (and some men) to get involved in the community and has provided pathways to paid employment and both community and political activities for women in the early childhood phases of their families and lives.

This is a sociological history of Hamilton Parents Centre organised in chronological and thematic sections, drawing on the voices of old and current members through in-depth interviews and focus groups, together with a detailed trawl through Hamilton Parents Centre, Federation of New Zealand Parents Centres and Institute for Early Childhood Studies (Wellington) archives.

The authors are two young sociologists, Blair Morgans and Holly Snape, graduates of the Department of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Waikato, and an "old identity" of Parents Centre and long-time University of Waikato family sociologist, David Swain. They bring to this sociological history both fresh perspectives and recollections of more than thirty years' association with Hamilton Parents Centre.

The text itself has been written to provide "a good read" for all those interested in this remarkable community-based organisation while the detailed sources are recorded in endnotes for those who may wish to pursue matters further themselves.