IS FAMILY LIFE breaking down? Are old people being thrown on the scrapheap?

"No", says Monash geographer, Ms. Anna Howe, "family provision of support for aged parents is commonplace in our society."

In fact, says Howe, old people without families are much more likely to need institutional care.

Howe, a senior tutor in the Monash geography department, says, however, that those old people cared for by their family tend to see their treatment as 'special' or 'exceptional' because — paradoxically — this helps to set them apart from what they themselves accept as the normal situation, one of 'disinterest and neglect'.

Howe arrived at these findings, and many others, during a two-year investigation of aspects of the living conditions and various means of maintaining the independence of aged people living in Melbourne.

As part of her study towards a doctor of philosophy degree, Howe researched a wide range of material, including population and housing statistics, aspects of the family life of the aged, the geographical patterns of utilisation of domiciliary services and other community facilities, and admissions to nursing homes.

Says Howe: "Many sons and daughters go to great lengths to look after their aged parents, despite claims in some quarters about the breakdown of the family unit and the demise of the extended family."

"In fact, if children were not caring for their aged parents there would just not be sufficient institutional capacity to look after 'abandoned' old folk. But even if there was a real choice between institutional or home care, the latter is much preferred by the aged and the community at large."

"The evidence shows that if aged people are not looked after by their families, the probable cause is that family relationships have broken down years earlier, or that the children are separated from their parents by reason of distance."

"This 'geographical' reason is an important factor in children not being able to minister to the needs of their aged parents. Population mobility and the spread of the city has meant that more and more families are moving beyond the range of daily personal contact, although telephones are used, and high car ownership can enable visits at least weekly."

"There is still a high level of co-residence, with three generations living under the same roof. About one-third of the aged live with other family members, one-third with only their spouse, and one-third live alone."

"Many of the last group are widows, who tend to stay on in the marital home. In contrast, almost no widowers live alone."

"There are some other interesting sex-based differences. Younger wives offer great protection to their older husbands, by caring for them at home, sometimes involving quite a degree of nursing skill."

"In community and voluntary services, women also carry the lion's share. Like many other women's roles, the value of this work is grossly underestimated because it is seen to be 'free'."

Howe has advised local government groups on the provision of support services for the aged, and finds a family "model" emerging in the development of services. While this is a move in the right direction, she comments that it still may not be possible to reach some people desperately in need of help because they do not have a family to link them into the service network."

"As well as giving help directly themselves, family members are very important in contacting and organising other, sometimes more specialised, services."

"We are not talking of new types of family, but of ways of doing things which have already been done in the past."

"Of course, not all aged people are fortunate enough to have someone to care for them. Many have no children or close relatives of their own to care for them. But we should not neglect those who do have these personal resources, or make them seem less important than those who do not. The real problem is how we can extend the family model to serve those who do not have it, so that they too can lead an independent and fulfilling life."

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Strategies for helping old people

“Because of the growing numbers of aged people, every effort must be made to maintain them in their homes. It must be emphasised that the proportion of old people in nursing homes — between three and four per cent — is not in itself the primary focus of community services.

The real problem is that with a growing number of aged people, even a static level of three per cent means an ever increasing number of patients, and the cost of their treatment is rising sharply. Even if we doubled expenditure on nursing homes, we would not double the number of old people in them. The system could only cope.

And such a strategy would leave very little for other assistance to the great majority who are managing one way or another in the community.

Some of the alternative strategies Howe is investigating include the provision of care of the aged in their homes, through domiciliary services.

There are major gaps in local services; for example of the 55 local government areas in Melbourne, some 18 have no meals-on-wheels, and about 23 don’t serve meals at elderly citizens’ clubs. Some of these areas have quite large aged populations, and these two services are the absolute minimum for any real possibility of keeping the aged managing in their homes.

In the inner city too there are a number of old ‘survivors’ who manage to get by with virtually no support from conventional welfare services, although they do seem to rely on agencies like the Brotherhood of St. Laurence.

People ‘at risk’

On objective criteria, these people would be far more ‘at risk’ than others already receiving a higher level of support. But whether you want to, or should, intervene in their lives is a very difficult question to answer.

The aim of part of Howe’s research has been to identify areas in the city where a high proportion of the aged are likely to be ‘at risk’: that is, likely to lose their independence in the event of even minor changes in their physical or social situation.

“If we can identify such groups and give priority to improving services in areas where they live, preventive measures can stabilise their situation.

Without such aid, many of these people come to a crisis point; they may be found seriously ill and need extensive hospitalisation, or have become so isolated that it is a major task for social workers to re-establish them socially.

These circumstances are more common in the inner city, although this is not the area with the highest concentration of aged population. This occurs rather in an arc of established suburbs from Kew through to Brighton.” (These residential patterns and underlying processes were the subject of a paper Howe delivered at the Australian Association of Gerontology Conference in Adelaide last year.)

She has found that old and young people are becoming increasingly segregated in different residential areas, with relatively few old people in the outer suburbs.

This is part of the sequence of the life cycle of the suburb — the suburb develops as young people move in to raise their families, then as children get older, they move away. The overall result is that the population of the early established suburbs gets older and older.

The inner city areas are going through a second cycle, with migrants from overseas rejuvenating the population structure. The migrants and young Australians in these areas often only stay there for a short time, while the old residual Australian-born group is there to stay.

She explains that good quality housing, occupied by aged people, will come on the housing market as they die.

In Melbourne, for example, people over 65 make up about 18 per cent of the population of suburbs such as Hawthorn, Brighton and Caulfield. They occupy something more than 18 per cent of available housing because of their low occupancy rate.

“As this aged population dies, or some of them move to other accommodation, there will be an increasing availability of quality housing close to the city. Either this housing will be knocked down to make way for dwellings that will cater for a lot more people, such as town houses, or young families will move into the old houses.

This factor could have an important influence on what, up to now, has seemed a limitless outward expansion of the suburbs.

Wherever old people live, they are likely to face a reduction in their personal mobility. With age, they become increasingly housebound, and the local neighbourhood becomes very important to them in providing for their needs.

Local government often faces a dilemma of whether to take things to the old person at home, such as with meals-on-wheels, home help and shopping services, or to take the old person to services available in the community, by providing assistance with transport. Ideally, both systems would operate.

Old people, too, are sometimes reluctant to accept help they regard as even remotely connected to welfare or charity. So while some councils are slow to develop services because they feel they might not be accepted, others have to impose stringent eligibility qualifications and ration out their resources to meet the demand.

“In many areas, particularly the better established suburbs, council efforts to ‘maintain standards’ act to the disadvantage of the aged. Building regulations and zoning do not permit the building of moderate cost, small flats, or hostels, which would be a suitable form of housing for the aged.

For example, an aged person or couple has no need for the two parking spaces so often required for unit developments.

“There also appears to be a number of old people who would change their housing, if they could do so in the same neighbourhood. But there is little suitable housing available, so many of them are forced to live in circumstances which can best be described as ‘poverty in the midst of affluence’.”

Says Howe: “Take this case: a widow, not wishing to leave the area where she has lived for many years, and where she has friends nearby, lives in a house conservatively valued at $50,000. Her only actual income may be the pension, but the work and cost of main taining the house, with insurance, repairs and rates, even with rebates, pose an enormous burden, both financially and in worry terms.”

Howe believes that there is considerable potential in schemes which have been proposed to enable old people to realise on their assets and shift to more suitable accommodation, and yield a ‘nest-egg’. Such schemes would further free the housing market, although there might be problems in their implementation.

Old people suspicious

“Old people can be very suspicious, often justifiably, when it comes to property transactions, and the complicated processes may deter them from even starting. Reading the fine print is hard at any age, and harder still at 60 or 70.

Some widows especially, have never handled sums larger than the household budget, or operated a cheque account.

And others have a strong desire to hold on to property to leave an estate to their heirs — and so may the heirs.”

Howe does feel that old people are, in many ways, better off now than they have ever been before.

“More old people now own their own homes, for example. So the task of defining the problem groups and the causes of their problems is important. There is just not an overall problem of old age in itself.

“In this respect, the types of care necessary for the various groups are likely to be different from and more diverse than that which has been offered in the past,” she adds.

Some of the patterns of care which are developing will be reported along with further findings of her own work in a book which Howe is editing, to be called Towards an Older Australia. Two former Monash geographers, Mr Terry Seedsman and Dr Jenny Morris, and administrative studies lecturer, Dr Russell Lansbury, are among the contributors.
Roadside strips of trees aid gliders

STRIPS OF TREES and other vegetation left growing alongside roads have helped a small marsupial — the sugar glider — adapt to changes in its habitat caused by fragmentation of large natural forests, a Monash researcher has found.

The researcher, Graeme Suckling, believes the strips of vegetation act as a bridge, linking the remnants of forest which remain. This in turn helps sugar gliders to re-colonise areas where they had previously died out, and allows them to forage more widely.

Suckling, a Forests Commission scientific officer who is on study leave from the Victorian Public Service, also says that a set of circumstances, including periodic burning-off along the strip, has resulted in regeneration of tree species, like acacias, on which the sugar glider relies for a significant portion of its food.

Suckling has spent the last two years carrying out the first scientific capture, tag and observation study of sugar gliders in the wild. The study is being supervised by Associate Professor A. K. Lee.

The sugar glider, which has the scientific name Petaurus breviceps, is one of five species of glider found in Australia. It ranges from New Guinea down the east coast of Australia into the south-east of South Australia. They are also found in Tasmania, but are thought to have been introduced there.

While greater weights have been recorded in captivity, adult male sugar gliders in the wild reach about 170 grams (six ounces) while adult females attain about 140 grams (4.5 ounces).

Suckling became interested in sugar gliders after carrying out an investigation of the effects of forest fragmentation on native mammals.

He repeatedly found sugar gliders occurring in large numbers in small isolated forest blocks surrounded by farmland.

He then decided to find out why this was so.

The study area covers a system of fragmented forest in south-west Gippsland. It includes a forested area of about 50 hectares connected to a five hectare plot by a roadside strip area 1.5km long and “about one tree wide.” There is another 1.5 hectare plot, isolated in open farmland, some 200 metres from the nearest portion of the roadside strip.

The area was forested before the advent of European settlers, with their clearing and intensive farming methods, more than a century ago.

So far, Suckling has tagged 167 sugar gliders with tiny reflective ear markers so that they are identifiable during spotlighting.

Says Suckling: “The reflective tags give the study an advantage. Because they can be seen at night, it is possible to keep detailed records and build up an accurate picture of sugar glider movements over extended periods by observation as well as by trapping.

“The highest sugar glider population density — ten per hectare — was found in the roadside strip. The isolated 1.5 hectare plot had a maximum population density of five in each of the two years, but it is doubtful if this population is viable because only one female was recorded there.

However, sugar gliders moved into and out of this area constantly. Because it is about 200 metres from the nearest roadside strip, the gliders covered bare pasture for a considerable distance to get to acacias, a valuable food resource, growing nearby.

“From continuous observation, I know that sugar gliders are breeding in the roadside strips; that they are a viable population and that they do not rely on an influx of animals from outside to sustain their numbers.”

Suckling believes several factors contribute to high population densities in the roadside strip. One is dietary.

With the help of another Ph.D. student in the zoology department, Andrew Smith, Suckling has closely analysed their food intake. This analysis revealed that during the winter months especially, sugar gliders depend on gum exuded from acacias. They regularly visited acacias during their nighttime feeding forays to lick up the exudate seeping from small holes the gliders cut in the bark. They also ate large numbers of moths, grubs and insects.

Says Suckling: “When we looked at the densities of acacias and sugar gliders, we found a relationship between them: where the density of acacias was highest, so was the population of sugar gliders, and vice versa.

“Regeneration of acacias in the roadside strips is enhanced because the strips are rarely grazed, and they are burnt off periodically by fire authorities.

“This is not the situation in other blocks, and as a result there is a loss of acacias, which need fire to begin their seeding cycle. In addition, young regeneration is usually destroyed by cattle and sheep in heavily grazed areas.

“There is evidence that sugar gliders, as well as other insectivorous inhabitants of the roadside strips, including bats, play an important role in controlling the insect populations which thrive in the mixed pasture and forest habitat.”

Suckling says sugar gliders usually glide a maximum distance of about 50 metres. An Australian Broadcasting Commission film crew, using a special high speed camera belonging to the zoology department, have taken film which throws new light on their gliding ability.

Membranes spread in flight

Suckling says: “From analysis of the film, the gliders appear to spring into space using the hind legs. When airborne, they spread their gliding membranes, called patagium. These membranes stretch from the outside finger of each forepaw to just behind the ankle of each leg.

“They are extremely manoeuvrable in flight... I have seen one hit a small twig, roll three somersaults, regain its composure and glide on.

“They are also able to use the patagium like a parachute to float to the ground if they fall short of their target.

“They can bank and dip under obstacles and land on the back of a tree opposite to the side from which they approached.

“To the naked eye, they appear to land gently, but the film in fact shows that landing is much more violent than that, and is probably the most critical part of each flight.

“Approaching the landing spot, they draw back all four limbs and hold their bodies in a parallel plane to the surface on which they intend to land. As they land, they throw their head back and all four limbs forward, using their limbs as shock absorbers. They land with a substantial shock and appear to bounce back before they begin bounding up the tree again.”

continued overleaf
Giders live in colonies

The gliders range widely in their search for food. They live in colonies, of up to ten animals, in large, dead trees, but will nest in any spot which gives shelter.

They leave their nests within half an hour of sunset and return before sunrise.

They are rarely seen during the day, but when they are, they are pestered by birds such as noisy miners, and Suckling has seen one taken by a goshawk during daylight hours.

Other natural predators include bokbook owls and goannas, which are common in the study area, and kookaburras, which take sugar glider young during the five week period they spend in the nest after leaving the pouch.

Females come on heat and breed during September, with young spending ten weeks in the pouch. Female sugar gliders have four nipples, but usually — about 75 per cent of the time — bear only two young, while the remainder have single births. Almost every adult female bred during the breeding season last year.

Suckling says it is difficult to assess what glider populations were like before forests were broken up by European settlers.

"Fragmentation of the forests resulted in widespread destruction of habitats for ground dwelling mammals, and hence, populations of these species have been drastically reduced. It is also probable that glider populations were greater when forests were continuous, but it is now obvious that they are thriving in the roadside strips.

"I would like to see these strips not only maintained but extended where practicable, and where they do not present a hazard to motor vehicles."

"My investigations show that they provide a habitat not only for sugar gliders but also for other glider species, possums and numerous birds which live, feed and breed in the strips. Koalas also move through them from time to time."

"If we can link the fragments of forests with roadside strips, we can significantly increase the chances of survival for these species within an environment which, it must be remembered, is basically oriented towards farming."

"But if the strips are disturbed, links between the different habitats will be broken. The value of forest remnants, once they are isolated, will decline."

Suckling believes that forest remnants should periodically be subjected to controlled burning and the exclusion of grazing so that species which need fire to begin the seeding cycle — like acacias — are able to regenerate and develop.

If this does not occur, within the next 50 to 100 years there will be a virtual degradation of the remnants, with dire results for their native animal populations, he says.

Diseases linked by 'stretched' cells

A MONASH MEDICAL researcher has, for the first time, scientifically demonstrated a possible mechanism for the relationship between two common modern afflictions — high blood pressure and hardening of the arteries.

The researcher, Dr Barry Oakes, has shown that if smooth muscle cells in arterial walls are stretched for long periods, as in high blood pressure, they are stimulated to produce increased amounts of the fibrous proteins found in so-called 'hardened' arteries.

Dr. Barry Oakes (above) developed this machine to stretch vascular smooth muscle cells. Stretch is applied to the tissues by means of a camshaft driven by an electric motor. "It has been known for many years that patients who have sustained high blood pressure have thick, hard arteries. It has been assumed that there is a causal relationship or link between the two conditions but no one has shown convincingly what the link is."

"I have demonstrated a connection between the two — that if smooth muscle cells grow in a tissue culture are simply mechanically stretched, there is increased production of elastin, collagen and some proteoglycan in the smooth muscle cells similar to that occurring in living specimens."

"From this, we can deduce that the cells being stretched are stimulated to synthesise the proteins, because this is the only possible explanation for their behaviour."

"The whole mechanism may now be closer to full explanation. If we understand it, we may eventually be able to block the synthesis of fibrous protein in the arterial wall in patients suffering from high blood pressure."

"The major problem," says Oakes, "is that once the arterial walls have laid down elastin
'Stretched' cells synthesise proteins

and collagen fibres, it is very difficult for the vessel to remove them, although recent evidence does suggest this can occur.

"Conditions such as atherosclerosis — the deposition of fatty substances on the inside of the arterial walls — eventually cause smooth muscle cells in the arterial walls to lay down increased amounts of fibrous proteins, and the cells also multiply, so that in the long term, they may block the artery, causing heart attacks and strokes."

"The deposits, which look like fatty streaks along the blood vessels, begin to be laid down in children as young as three or four. They tend to build up as the years progress. This may be partly related to diet, smoking, high blood pressure and not having enough exercise."

"The smooth muscle cells, the key cells in the arterial walls, respond to fat infiltration in atherosclerosis by laying down more fibrous tissues. This eventually leads to hardening of the arteries."

Five years ago, Oakes began developing the tissue culture system which enabled him to grow large amounts of connective tissues outside the body.

The process, which involves removing cells from the aorta of a one-day-old rat, separating them by enzymes, and then growing them on a thinly sliced section of aorta taken from an ox, was brought to full use through the expertise of Bingham and Norman:

For the process, a primary, or first, culture of cells taken from the animal is used. The usual practice is to grow cells for a number of generations but this was found unsatisfactory because the cells tended to change in the process.

Therefore, new, young cells are 'plated' on to the ox aorta in a rich nutrient fluid at a density similar to that of the living animal.

Oakes found it was also necessary to keep close control of hydrogen ion concentration in the specimen and to this end, used a 'buffer' technique which has recently become available.

He says: "Using the new method, we have been able to simulate, very closely, what is happening in the living system ... it is probably as close as man has yet come to recreating what is happening in a living process — in this case the developing elastic arterial wall."

When the cells have grown to two to three layers thick, the section of ox aorta on to which they have been plated is held between two clamps and then stretched mechanically for two to three weeks by means of a camshaft driven by an electric motor.

The specimens are contained in specially modified tissue culture flasks in a completely sterile cabinet. The machine was developed by members of the Dean of Medicine's engineering workshop staff, led by Mr John Robertson with assistance from Mr Albert Lubbe.

Oakes explains: "The continuous stretching stimulates the production of elastin and some collagen as well. It should be noted, however, that these results are only qualitative, and more sophisticated biochemical measurements are required to ascertain exactly how much is being produced.

"If blood pressure remains high for long periods, the blood vessels, especially the aorta, and even the very small vessels, get thicker and harder. It is thought that in this situation, the mechanism controlling blood pressure is not acting normally, and when there is excess anxiety or stress, the arterioles — the tiny taps which control blood flow — screw down tighter."

"Investigations have shown that large amounts of elastin and collagen are laid down in hypertensive patients. It was not known whether this was due to a simple mechanical stress factor or to the influence of a host of other hormones and other agents floating around in the bloodstream."

Essentially, once these vessels become thickened by elastin and collagen fibrous structures, they have a lessened resistance to stretch ... the vessels remain like rigid pipes, not dilating with each heart beat, even though the taps — the arterioles — are open."

"This is probably an important sustaining factor in hypertension and a reason why it is vital to treat the condition in its early stages."

At present, Oakes is stretching two specimens with the machine, while another two specimens are contained in the same sterile environment as controls, but he intends to develop the machine so that it can handle many more.

"It is hoped that we will get a greater insight into the capacity of the arterial smooth muscle cells to synthesise the production of fibrous proteins."

"We know little about this at present, or why the cells multiply and produce excessive amounts of fibrous proteins in conditions such as atherosclerosis and hypertension."
Singapore languages

From an early date, too, education authorities encouraged the teaching of English in schools with the result that pre-school children were picking up a smattering of the language — albeit distinctly colloquial — before they went to school. In 1956, an all-party committee of Parliament recommended bilingual primary and secondary education, with schools teaching in the medium of English, Chinese (Mandarin), the southern Indian language, Tamil, and Malay.

A child going to a Tamil-medium school, for example, would be taught in Tamil and would learn English as a second language. A child attending an English-medium school would be taught in English but would also study one of the other languages. Platt says this, in theory, meant that every child was being taught in English at school or had English as a second language.

Over the years, the percentage of children being taught in English-medium schools has grown so that now it is estimated that this year about 90 per cent of new pupils enrolled are in English-medium schools. The vast majority have Mandarin as a second language, although their second language choice is likely to be related to their ethnic background.

The Singapore Government has expressed some concern over the swing to English, and moves have been made to ensure that some subjects are taught entirely in the other languages.

Says Platt: "While Mandarin is the official Chinese language, Hokkien is the main background language of the older sections of the Chinese population and most Chinese of other dialect backgrounds have some competence in it. Some other Chinese dialects, like Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese and Hakka, are also spoken."

"Take the case of a businessman of minority Hakka background, well educated at an English-medium school; he would probably speak Hakka when discussing domestic matters with his family, use Hokkien for public transport or the marketplace. Mandarin to some Chinese-medium educated friends and more formal English for discussing such topics as business and economics. He would then go right to the other end of the scale and use colloquial Singapoorean English to talk to a car park attendant or with close friends."

"On the other hand, a man with Hokkien as his background language and a Chinese-medium education would be more likely to discuss political or business affairs in Mandarin, although this would depend largely on the background language of the other person taking part in the conversation."

It is important to realise, Platt explains, that while many Singaporeans are multi-lingual, they may not be able to discuss every subject in every language they use.

It is also difficult to assess how much a person knows of a particular language. He says English-medium educated Singaporeans move up and down a scale between more formal Singapore English and a colloquial Singapore English 'dialect', which has its own forms of expression and idiomatic usage.

Colloquial Singapoorean English draws some of its structure from the background of Chinese, Tamil and Malay. To analyse Singapore English, Platt goes through a painstaking process of recording the speech of individuals in a variety of everyday situations and systematically scouring it for patterns in sentence structure, use of particular forms of syntax, pronunciation and unusual constructions.

For example, in colloquial Singapoorean English, the forms of the verb 'be' are often omitted, as they are in Chinese. Colloquial English also drops pronouns — as does Chinese — where they are understood from the context of the sentence.

In addition, colloquial Singapoorean English often puts the object before the subject, such as "This one I don't like", reflecting similar language constructions used to give emphasis in Chinese and Malay.

There is also the use of the word 'la' which, Platt explains, enters colloquial Singapoorean English only when close friends are having a conversation.

It is used in the context: "See you la. Goodbye la, see you next time."

Platt says that on occasions, he has noticed Singaporeans not educated in English-medium schools use 'la' wrongly because they do not know the 'rules' for its use.

The study reveals in a practical way how people acquire a second language and such factors as how they begin using one grammatical form before another.

Platt, whose work has been supported by the Australian Research Grants Committee, says that in a compact-sized, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic nation like Singapore, it is possible to observe both language choice and language acquisition in a way that is not always so apparent in a country like Australia.

Besides its theoretical interest, Platt feels that his work is important for Australia, which is now a multilingual, multi-ethnic society, although of a different type from Singapore.

With many immigrants from south-east Asia, including those from Vietnam, many of whom are of a Chinese background, work on multilingualism and English language acquisition in Singapore is of practical value in the construction of English language programmes.

He says: "In Singapore, we have an opportunity to see how multilingual people communicate — to investigate how language is changed to meet different situations and how one language influences another."

Problems for new teachers: finding

MANY NEW TEACHERS do not acquire information about, or mastery of, basic teaching techniques during their first year of duty.

This is a major finding of a national study — the first of its kind — carried out by two Monash educationists on behalf of the Federal Government-sponsored Education Research and Development Committee.

The researchers also found that the effectiveness of means of helping new teachers depended on interpersonal factors such as the relationship between new teachers and their more experienced colleagues.

The researchers say their report sets out to increase public awareness of the magnitude, complexity and uncertainty of the induction process for new teachers.

The researchers are professor of education, Professor R.P. Tisher, and Mr J.A. Fyfield, a senior lecturer in the faculty of Education. They were helped by Mrs Sue Taylor, a M.Ed. student in the faculty.

During the research program, which occupied 18 months, the researchers visited Australian states and territories, talking with senior education department officials, members of colleges, universities and schools, school principals and teacher union officials.

Crucial for development

The researchers say that each year, well over 12,000 newly-trained teachers enter Australian schools to begin their professional career.

Although it is believed that the first year has its own special problems, and that the way teachers cope with them can be crucial for their later professional development, there has, until recently, been little systematic investigation into the conditions surrounding the transition from student to teacher or the special arrangements that schools or school systems make to support the transition.

During 1977, two samples of new teachers were invited to supply information by way of questionnaires about special help they received in their first year, how they felt about various aspects of their appointment, and the task confronting them.

In addition, principals of schools in the first sample were surveyed, and members of the research team also interviewed some new teachers in all states.
Tisher and Fyfield say it is now possible to sketch an Australian picture, which mainly clarifies what the states have in common, rather than highlighting differences between them.

The report reveals, the researchers say, that the year of entry into teaching as a fully qualified teacher is very significant in personal terms.

They say: "It is important as a time of personal development, attendant upon a change of role, status and living style (this is particularly so for the majority who are in their early twenties.)"

"Recognition of this is vital, not only for induction in the narrow sense of adaptation to the demands of existing rules and procedures, but for setting the context in which the newcomer can make a positive, refreshing and creative contribution to the school.

"Learning to be a teacher is not merely a matter of technique: it is very much a matter of personal development. And the vitality of a school is as much dependent on staff development in this sense as on methods and technique.

Tisher and Fyfield emphasise that the report does not make precise recommendations for induction procedures for new teachers.

They say: "Rather, it sets out to create an awareness of the magnitude, complexity and uncertainty of the induction process.

"What is done in a given state or by a given education authority will have its characteristics governed to some extent by local practices and historical antecedents.

"The challenge is to recognise the complexity of the tasks."

They continue: "There is not likely to be a unanimous reaction to the report."

"Some will see encouraging signs in it: others will be alarmed at the shortcomings it reveals."

"On the one hand, education authorities may be judged to be doing well when more than half of the newly inducted teachers could report that they received formal confirmation of their appointment more than three weeks in advance, and that 69 per cent were able to visit their schools before entering duty."

"Employing authorities and senior staff can justifiably take some credit that the majority of new teachers were prepared to express satisfaction with their appointment, claimed that they were managing most teaching tasks adequately, believed they were fully accepted within the school, considered they had been fairly treated in the allocation of duties and believed that various aspects of their job matched what they preferred.

"On the other hand, it is a matter of concern that almost three-quarters of the new teachers did not know where to receive information about the schools for which they had applied, about one-quarter did not find information readily available on many school procedures once they took up duty, one in every seven had to mark time for two school weeks or more before they received their work allocation, and only one in two were consulted before they received their allocation."

Tisher and Fyfield add: "Fewer than half had regular professional activities designed for them, and only half saw much value in the activities which were arranged.

"Fifty per cent received no help with their teaching during the first week, yet help was needed.

"About one-quarter of the new teachers admitted that they were managing many basic teaching tasks less than adequately, and over a third believed they were not fully accepted in their schools."

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**Monash collects our rich ethnic heritage**

**QUESTION:** What do such curiosities as the minutes — in German — of other synods held in Melbourne in the 1850s and Chinese newspapers of the same vintage distributed on the goldfields, have in common?

**Answer:** They represent examples of Australia's rich mine of historic ethnic material, much of which has not been fully explored.

Now, Monash University's Centre for Migrant Studies and the University Library have combined to gather together material from our diverse ethnic past to form the basis of an Ethnic Heritage Collection.

The collection will include newspapers, diaries, manuscripts, church and settlement records, family histories, and tapes and perhaps photographs.

The aim of the collection is to serve Australia as a whole — not just researchers and curriculum planners — because it will preserve primary data which might otherwise be lost.

The acting chairman of the Centre, Associate Professor Michael Clyne, and the University Librarian, Mr Brian Southwell, announced the establishment of the Ethnic Heritage Collection recently.

Associate Professor Michael Clyne holds a copy of *The English and Chinese Advertiser*, published on the goldfields in 1857.

They say it will reflect Monash's strong research and teaching interest in migrants, migration, bilingualism, multiculturalism and ethnicity.

The Centre for Migrant Studies at Monash — the first of its kind in Australia — was established in 1974 to co-ordinate teaching in migrant studies in various faculties and departments. It oversees a graduate diploma course, and as well, conducts fortnightly seminars, encourages research and provides an editorial base for the international journal, 'Ethnic Studies' which is published three times each year by Australian International Press and Publications Pty. Ltd.

'Ethnic Studies' publishes reviews, articles and information on issues relating to migrants in disciplines including sociology, linguistics, history, psychology and education, fulfilling its commitment to promote interaction between scholars from the various disciplines who are investigating ethnic questions.

According to Clyne, Australia has a long, colorful and diverse history of migrations. They came — for a multitude of reasons — from all the corners of the world, and they played a role in fashioning the national consciousness.

But, says Clyne, some early historians tended to underestimate their contribution. These historians, instead, adopted a 'monolithic' view of Australian history which concentrated almost exclusively on British influences, and gave little, if any, recognition to the impact of migrants.

However, Clyne contends that there is still much to be learnt about the role migrants played in Australia's political and social development.

In the 1850s for example, there was an influx of migrants who had been participants in the revolutions of 1848 in Europe.
Engineers develop new drying system

MONASH CHEMICAL engineers have developed a new, more efficient system for removing water from coal and metal ores.

A pilot plant incorporating the new system has been constructed, and at present, it is handling a metal ore mined extensively in Australia.

The technique could have wide application in extractive industries, as well as in processes for drying salt and sand, which is used in many manufacturing operations.

The head of the team which developed the system, Professor Owen Potter, says the pilot plant is operating satisfactorily, and has the capacity to remove up to 130 kilograms of water per hour.

Potter, who is chairman of the chemical engineering department at Monash, says the plant could be adapted to handle a wide range of ores and mineral products — from iron oxide through to nickel ores and alumina — which are processed in 'particulate' or grain form.

The system being developed is part of a larger project at the university, with the aim of reducing energy costs and increasing plant throughput.

Before the turn of the century, Melbourne had a classical German grammar school, a bilingual German-English primary school, and a French school — Oberwyl — which operated in St Kilda. By 1900, there were about 80 bilingual schools in Australia.

Numerous towns in South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and NSW were more or less homogeneous German settlements.

Newspapers, too, reflected cultural diversity. They were published to serve the needs of different ethnic groups, and far from being introspective, examined a wide range of Australian issues, like pluralism, attitudes to the British and Chinese, and commented on the local political scene as well.

Politicians took advantage of the ethnic press to solicit votes on the basis that they were the most tolerant and liberal persons standing for the seat, and as such, would be more attentive to the needs of migrants.

Says Clyne: "We are collecting this material to enlarge our understanding of our multicultural background.

"Our studies are basically interdisciplinary. For instance, some of the material we have on tape to study for its linguistic content is also of interest to sociologists and historians.

"By preserving this material, we can ensure its availability for future generations. It would be a tragedy if it was lost."