

# CATHOLIC MARRIAGE GUIDANCE COUNCIL OF W.A.

## 1987-1988 ANNUAL REPORT

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### 1. INTRODUCTION:

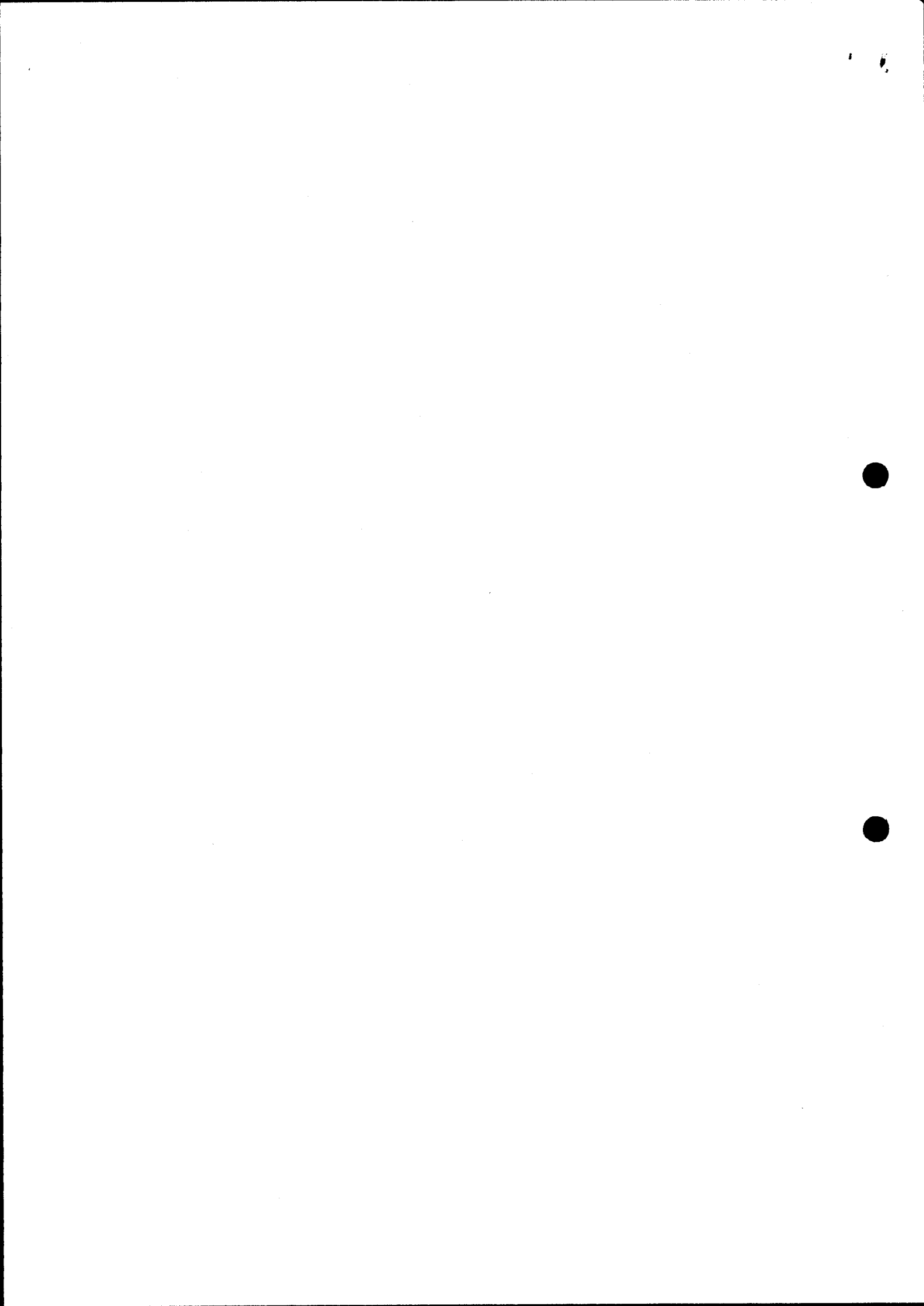
- 1.1 The Catholic Marriage Guidance Council of W.A. has continued to operate under the name of Centrecare Marriage and Family Service - Marriage Counselling Section.
- 1.2 This Annual Report does not include any statistical information or discussion of the statistical profile of the Marriage Counselling Section of the Agency. The introduction of the standardised annual statistical return sheets and their analysis by the Attorney General's Department means that such content is no longer necessary.
- 1.3 This report will, however, provide an overview of the clinical administrative and training/staff development aspects of the Agency's Marriage Counselling Section, together with an audited financial statement and a staff list.

### 2. CLINICAL ISSUES:

- 2.1 The administrative records associated with the Intake System indicate that there have been a number of significant improvements in the availability of marriage counselling, especially since February, 1988. The changes were -
  - (i) The waiting period between intake and the first appointment has been generally eliminated except for isolated periods, and for those clients whose availability is restricted (e.g. evenings, Friday afternoon). The waiting period for such clients usually does not exceed 2 - 3 weeks.
  - (ii) The number of clients who either cancelled or "did not attend" for their first appointment totalled eight for the year (compared with 57 in the previous year). An additional 29% of clients received marriage counselling in the past year.
  - (iii) The number of potential clients who were referred to other agencies for marriage counselling totalled 29 for the past year, compared with 115 for 1986-87. No referrals to outside agencies have occurred since February 1988.

The reason for the above improvements can be attributed to an increase in the 'full time equivalent' of counselling staff from 1.4 in 1986-87 to 2.5 in 1987-88, the result of the appointment of a full time marriage counsellor and an increase in the availability of counsellors (new and existing). Staff changes will be discussed further later in this report.

- 2.2 The outreach activities of the agency have continued to expand during 1987-1988. A regular Group programme (twice yearly) includes groups which are specifically related to relationship issues. The Groups were all well attended and included -
  - (i) "The End ... and a New Beginning" - a support and therapy group for people who are recently separated (offered twice);
  - (ii) "Assertiveness Training";



- (iii) "Getting Over..." (bereavement)
- (iv) Group Therapy for those experiencing emotional distress and unable to cope (this group attracted participants who experienced distress because of conflict in relationships)
- (v) Effective and Satisfying Parenting (offered twice)

In May, 1988, the Agency held a public seminar and workshop on "Parents and Teens" at which Clayton Barbeau presented. These activities were funded, in part, by a grant from the West Australian Department for Community Services "Family Package" Programme. The response from the public was most pleasing and encouraging to the point, where the Agency is contemplating organising a public lecture annually, on topics related to marriage and family.

Requests for talks and information related to marriage counselling were received from schools, parish groups and various community groups. The number of requests from organisations (e.g. parish councils) for workshops and information evenings on topics related to the enhancement of marital and family relationships has increased during the year. In March 1988 one marriage counsellor was assigned the role of developing and co-ordinating the outreach activities of the Agency (one day per week). The "outreach" worker promotes the Agency, the availability of marriage counselling and the availability of resources to enhance the quality of relationships in addition to conducting some groups herself. Promotional material about the Agency was being prepared to assist the "outreach" worker at the close of the financial year.

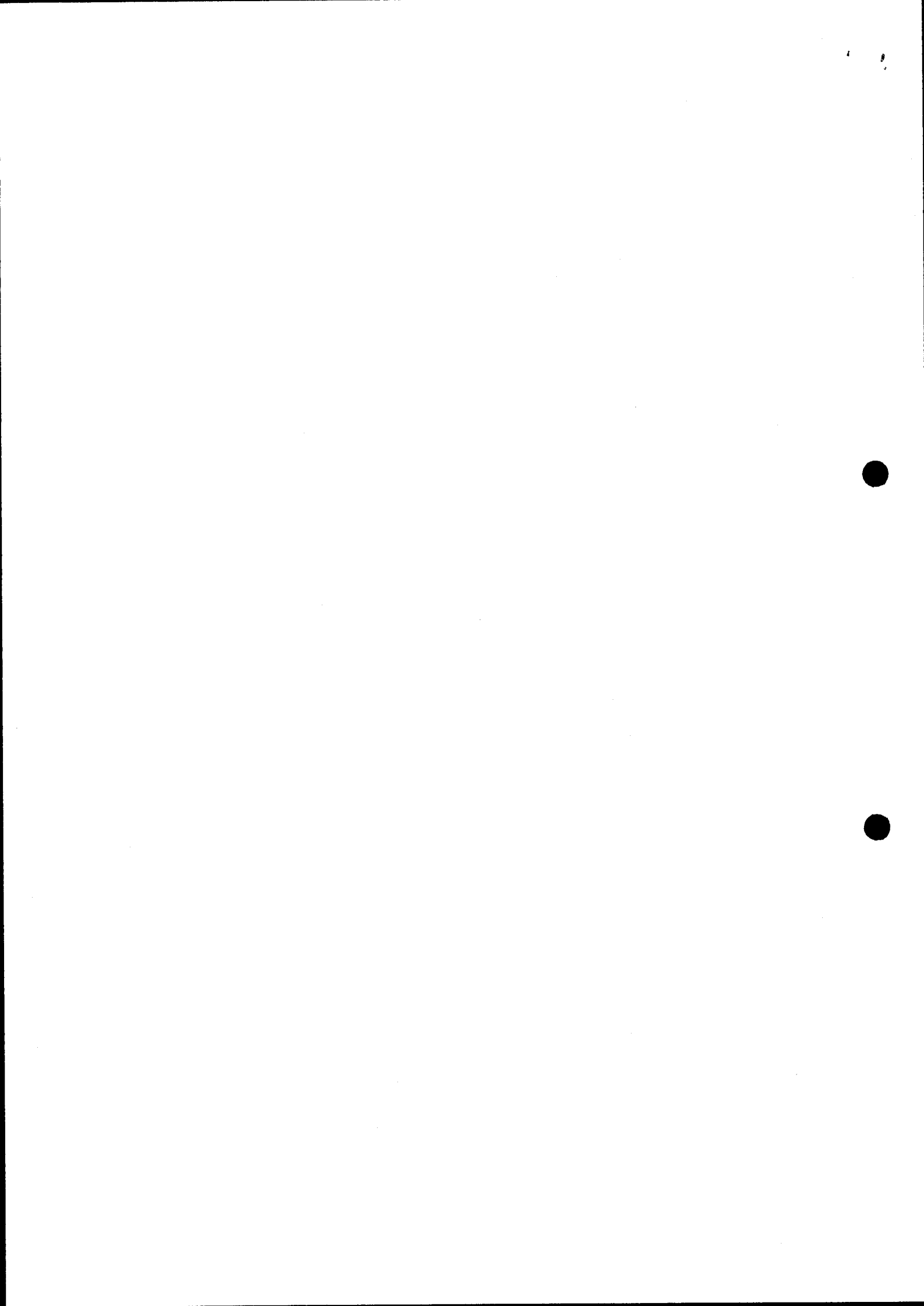
The development of preventative approaches through group work and outreach are continuing. The rate of development is determined, in part, by the availability of staff. Making the co-ordination of the activities the prime responsibility of one worker has assisted the implementation of these initiatives.

### 3. ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES:

3.1 The Management Board entered its second year of operation during the year. There have been six members, and some delays were experienced in the appointment of a seventh. The Co-ordinators attend Board Meetings as ex officio members. The Board has met monthly throughout the year. The Chairman, Kevin Wringe, was absent for four months whilst on an overseas study tour as a Churchill Fellow, and Joe Goerke assumed the responsibilities of the Chair and his absence.

The Board has continued to work on projects important to the continuing development of the Marriage Counselling Services. These projects include:

- (i) The development of Catholic Marriage Counselling Services on a State-wide basis (e.g. Geraldton) and the regionalisation of the Service within the Perth Archdiocese (e.g. North Beach and Kalgoorlie);
- (ii) the writing of a new Constitution for the Service, which has included reviewing the philosophy, mission and objectives of the Service. The reformulated Constitution was awaiting final approval by the W.A. Catholic Social Welfare Commission at the close of the year;



- (iii) participation in a review of the salaries and conditions of all employees of diocesan counselling and welfare agencies;
- (iv) the appointment of a Director for the total service, who will be responsible for the overall administration and management of the Service; and
- (v) the acquisition of new accommodation and improved resources for the Service.

3.2 The staffing situation of the Marriage Counselling Service significantly improved during 1987-1988 with the appointment of a full-time marriage counsellor, the result of increased funding through the Attorney General's Department. Wendy Meynert was formally appointed to this position in March 1988.

The availability of other marriage counselling staff also increased during the year. Two trainee marriage counsellors commenced their intern year in February 1988; one marriage counsellor returned from extended leave and we acquired the services of an externally-trained counsellor who joined the service as a "probationary marriage counsellor". These increases were off-set to a degree by the resignation of other staff. The availability of marriage counselling staff increased over the year from the equivalent of 1.4 full time workers to 2.5 full time workers. To date, this increase has been most evident in a reduction in the length of the waiting period.

The number of clients who did not attend for or cancelled their first interview and the number of potential clients who were referred elsewhere has reduced. There has been a significant increase in the number of clients who received marriage counselling, particularly from February to June 1988, inclusive.

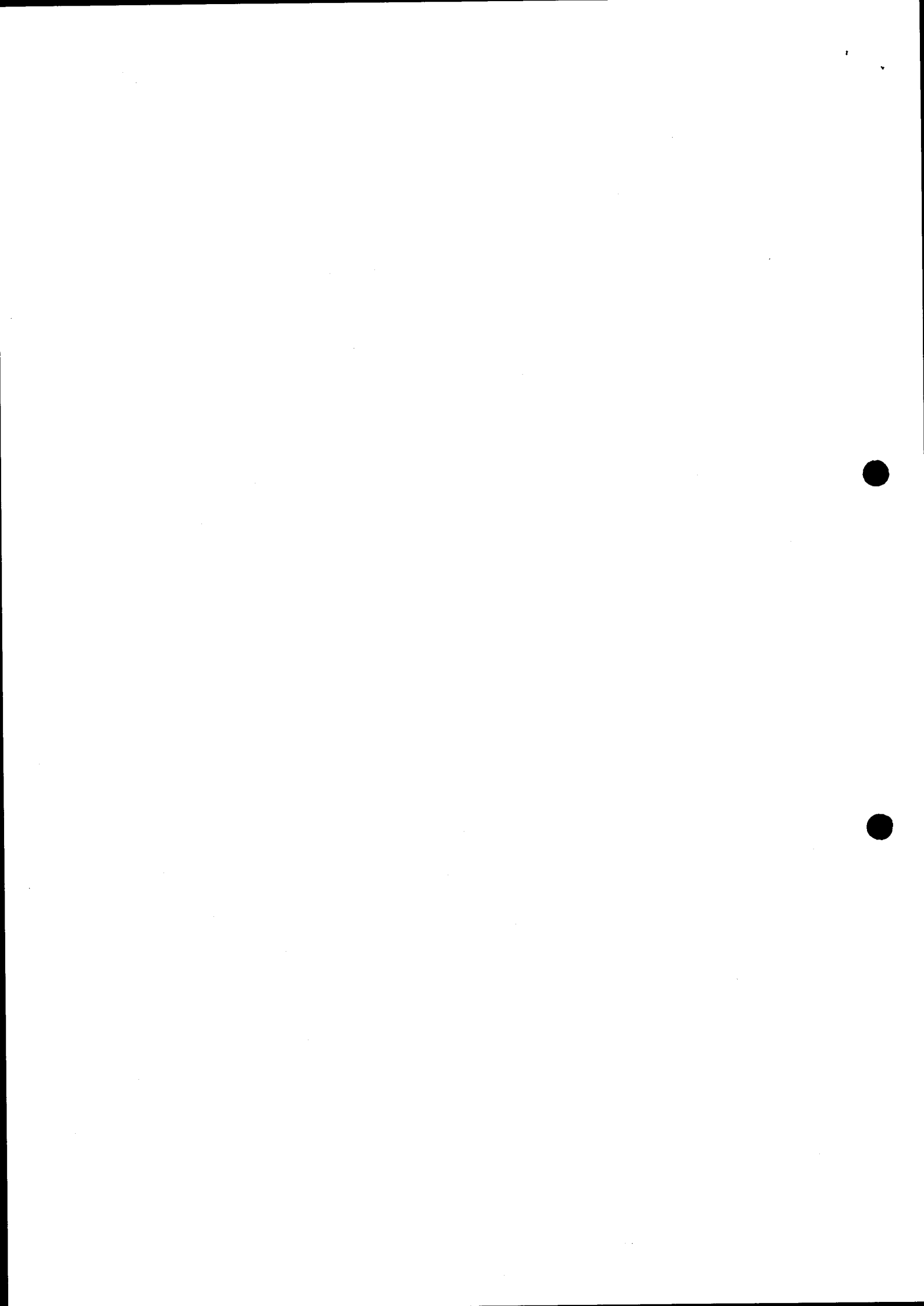
There were staffing changes in the administration of the Service. Chris Hall left the position of Co-ordinator in January 1988 to take up the position of Project Officer with the National Catholic Association of Family Agencies (on a secondment basis for three years). Margaret van Keppel was appointed as the Acting-Co-ordinator for two months, and was appointed to the position in March 1988. Wendy Meynert transferred from the Intake Worker's position to the position of Marriage Counsellor (full-time). Patsy Hammer and Celia Joyce shared the Intake Worker's position between March and June.

Where possible, sessional payments have been made to the part-time marriage counsellors, and the feasibility and economic viability of increasing this practice is an issue that has been under consideration. It is anticipated that more staff will receive sessional payments in the coming year.

3.3 The Intake System has continued to prove to be an effective means of receiving new clients into the Service and allocating them to the most appropriate counsellor. The transfer of Wendy Meynert from Intake Worker to Marriage Counsellor proved to be an opportune time to review the Intake System as it had become increasingly apparent, that whilst the system worked successfully, it was a stressful task for one worker. A trial period of "job sharing" was introduced in May 1988. This trial period appeared to be successful, but no future plans or appointments had been finalised at the close of the year.



- 3.4 The Staff Development and Support Committee has continued to meet on a monthly basis throughout the year. Members of this Committee are those staff who supervise counsellors. Matters considered by the Committee include supervision, staff training needs, applications for employment, selections of trainees, the development of the group programme and the development and co-ordination of preventative programmes. The accreditation-re-accreditation programme was also prepared by this Committee in the latter stages of the year. This Committee has proven to be an appropriate means of responding to the needs of the Service (in relation to clients and staff) and of developing new initiatives.
- 3.5 Staff training needs have been met in a number of different ways throughout the year. Staff members have attended training programmes organised by other agencies or tertiary institutions (e.g. Workshop on Domestic Violence organised by the W A Marriage Guidance Council Inc) regular case discussions were re-introduced for staff, all marriage counsellors received supervision once a fortnight (trainee marriage counsellors received supervision weekly) and two formal training programmes were organised for the staff of the Service. The first of these was a workshop by Rhea Zakich on "Communication in Families" and the second was a two day workshop on "Working with Systems" by Andrew Relph.
- 3.6 Accreditation and re-accreditation of marriage counsellors is scheduled to take place in October 1988. The last three months of the year were spent revising the policy and planning the forthcoming procedures, so that counsellors could receive a minimum of three months' notice to allow adequate preparation. No major difficulties were experienced in the revision of the policy.
- 3.7 In addition to the two trainee marriage counsellors completing their "intern" year, a further trainee commenced training in March 1988. This trainee is completing his first year in the training course offered by the W A Marriage Guidance Council Inc., in a similar arrangement to that made in 1987.
- 3.8 The concept of regionalisation of Catholic Marriage Counselling Services has been further developed through the year to the point where negotiations have taken place with interested persons at Geraldton, North Beach and Kalgoorlie. North Beach and Kalgoorlie are both within the Archdiocese of Perth and negotiations have commenced with representatives from those parishes to explore the feasibility of establishing marriage counselling services within the local communities. The need for marriage counselling services in these areas had been identified. Geraldton is outside of the Archdiocese of Perth and the need to establish a marriage counselling service in this town made the need to form a W A State Division for Catholic Marriage Counselling Services more urgent through the year. Whilst negotiations have continued, approval was obtained from Archbishop Foley for Geraldton to become a branch of Centrecare Marriage and Family Service. It was under this arrangement that additional funding for a Geraldton Service was sought by this Service.
- 3.9 The issue of "fees for service" has been further considered during the year. The Service is of the view that the availability of services would expand if more funds were obtained by introducing a system of payment/donation by clients. A



scale of suggested donations, based on client's income, has been devised. A brochure incorporating this scale is to be prepared and given to clients in the forthcoming year.

- 3.10 Plans for the introduction of computerisation of the Service have continued to take shape. The approval in principle was obtained from the Management Board and a series of consultations has taken place with computer professionals. It is expected that the actual purchase of computer hardware and software will take place in the last months of 1988.
- 3.11 The Service has maintained its affiliations with both the Australian Council of Marriage Counselling Organisations and the National Catholic Association of Family Agencies during the past year. The Co-ordinator and the Accountant attended the ACOMCO Annual General Meeting and Workshop in Canberra in February 1988, and the Co-ordinator attended the NCAFA Annual General Meeting and meetings in Sydney in May 1988. These affiliations have proved to be most beneficial to the Agency by assisting it to remain in touch with developments in all areas on a national level.

#### 4. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

There have been significant positive changes in the availability of marriage counselling services to the community during 1987-88, and the high standard of service available to clients has continued. The important contributions made by the marriage counsellors and other staff of the Service is acknowledged and appreciated. The support and assistance afforded the Service by the staff of the Attorney General's Department, Archbishop Foley and the Catholic Social Welfare Commission and by members of ACOMCO and NCAFA is also sincerely appreciated.

MARGARET VAN KEPPEL  
Co-ordinator, Counselling Programmes

23 September 1988



## CENTRECARE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SERVICE

## STAFFING OF THE MARRIAGE COUNSELLING SECTION 1987/1988

NAME	DESIGNATION	MARRIAGE COUNSELLING HOURS	STATUS
KEVIN WRINGE	Chairman, Management Board	-	Administrative
FR. GEOFF BYER	Member, Management Board	-	Administrative
SR. PAT BOYLE	Member, Management Board	-	Administrative
JOE GOERKE	Member, Management Board	-	Administrative
TONY McDERMOTT	Member, Management Board	-	Administrative
JIM WOLTON	Member, Management Board	-	Administrative
MARGARET VAN KEPPEL	Co-ordinator (half time)	-	Administrative and Supervisory
WENDY MEYNERT	Marriage Counsellor (full-time) (former Intake worker)	100%	Clinical and Supervisory
PATSY HAMMER	Intake Worker/Marriage Counsellor (3.5 days per week)	100%	Clinical and Outreach
CELIA JOYCE	Intake Worker /Marriage Counsellor (2.5 days per week)	100%	Clinical (locum)
MARION BOGUE	Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (voluntary)
MARGARET COLLOPY	Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (voluntary)
JEM MESTICHELLI	Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (voluntary)
SR. PEGGY MURPHY	Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (paid sessional and voluntary)
FR. REG. SMITH	Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (honorarium)
KAREN HALL	Probationary Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (volunteer)
BARBARA BERTHOLD	Trainee Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (intern)
JULIE TAYLOR	Trainee Marriage Counsellor (part-time)	100%	Clinical (intern)
PAUL KERIN	Trainee Marriage Counsellor	-	-
CHRIS HALL	Co-ordinator (half time)	Seconded to NCAFA January 1988	
DAN COUGHLIN	Marriage Counsellor	Retired January 1988	
ED DEVEREUX	Marriage Counsellor	Locum complete December 1987	
RAY FIRTH	Marriage Counsellor	On extended leave	
DELIA McGUINNESS	Secretary/Office Manager (half-time)	-	Administrative
SUE BLAKE	Typing Assistant (half-time)	-	Administrative
NOELLE PURVES	Reception Assistant (part-time)	-	Administrative
GIL BAGGEN	Accountant (part-time)	-	Administrative (honorarium)

