



Letter to the Editor by Tony Pietropiccolo, Director of Centrecare, published in The West Australian 23/11/2016

Preventive action saves children

Colleen Egan's report *Lost Kid to Baby Killer* (*News*, 19-20/11) was right to highlight the plight of many children in our community.

For many years those of us who work in the social services have been arguing for a greater focus on preventive action.

Intensive family support with at-risk families is a highly effective and cost-efficient response to such situations.

However, for too long such interventions have been under resourced and spasmodic.

They are often seen by decision makers as either largely unnecessary or too costly. Expert, professional opinion on such matters is has been placed in the "bleeding heart" category and largely ignored.

We need to rethink the short-termism of our social policy. The community, especially through its civil and political leaders, has to more clearly articulate the type of society it wants — and then be willing to pay for it.

The law and order, tough talk approach alone will not give us a society in which people will live peaceably together, nor one where each child has the opportunity to maximise their potential.

As in most things, there is a need for a balanced approach, one that is not driven by indiscriminate blame and fear.

We need a response that is based on a clear understanding of the long term gestation and complexity of the experiences that some families and children face.

Then we must have a willingness to do what it takes to resolve the problems identified. Without such a commitment we will continue to have antisocial behaviour, with lives unfulfilled or lost, for many years to come.

**Tony Pietropiccolo AM, Director
CentreCare**