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## Editorial

# The cycle of life: growing up, blowing up, growing old

*Shirli Kirschner*

This is the first edition in a three part special series of the ADR Bulletin. The series showcases the use of conflict management and ADR processes in a range of situations that form part of the cycle of life. We have tried to ensure a diversity of approach in the articles selected to demonstrate the range and potential of conflict management and ADR interventions.

This first edition deals with the use of conflict management and ADR with children as they begin to interact with society.

By focusing on children, who are not fully formed in their behaviour patterns, there is the potential to change the approach to conflict of a whole generation. To deal with crime, violence and unrest among youth, interventions are needed which will model problem solving techniques which are empowering and productive. The ideal is to break down paradigms of violence and transform them, using a problem solving approach.

This edition looks at this approach in a number of circumstances. The first article looks at a systematic approach introduced by the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS). This is an innovative program which will have far reaching consequences if the pilot can be successfully introduced and expanded within their services. The second article looks at youth conferencing. It reflects how allowing parties to deal with their own and other people's underlying needs can provide a personal and transformative experience for a young offender and thereby cause a shift in his or her thinking about conflict resolution.

At the core of these interventions is the move from looking at parties' positions to looking at their underlying needs, values and fears, and fashioning solutions to meet

those. There have been a number of innovations and much development in this area over the last few years. This has included a greater awareness of the range of interest based processes available and a consciousness of the sometimes subtle, but significant, distinctions between different types of mediation, conciliation and conferencing.

Some of the early theoretical work in interest based negotiation was done by the Harvard Negotiation Project, and particularly Roger Fisher and Bill Ury. This work, as set out in *Getting to Yes*, *Getting Past No* and the subsequent writings of others in the Project, relies on a number of interest based tools to help parties to make the transition from positions to interests in a meaningful way. The final article in this edition uses two such tools, the four quadrant and seven element tools, to analyse a situation within a school. It is included as an illustration of the effectiveness of using diagnostic tools to transition from a single intervention such as mediation to the beginnings of a system for resolving issues.

The next edition will be entitled 'Blowing up' and will deal with the use of conflict management interventions and ADR in adult society in situations ranging from the workplace, to the armed forces, to outback Australia.

Finally, I would like to say a special thank you to Julie Hart, who approached the search for interesting and diverse articles for this special edition with enthusiasm and creativity. I hope the same spirit will make the expansion of conflict management processes into our everyday life a fait accomplis! ●

*Shirli Kirschner,  
Special Edition Editor.*

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