

# THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER



## President's Report

1996 promises to be a very full and busy year for us. As you all now know it is the 50th Anniversary of both the WA Branch and the AASW nationally.

Our Branch Conference is to be "Building a Civil Society: Responsibility, Participation and Choice". It is hoped that all Branch members will feel free to contribute to this conference in one way or another. You are all urged to seriously consider presenting a paper at the conference as this topic is both a relevant follow on from the privatisation debate of our last conference and a necessary issue that must be explored by our profession.

The "civil society" and the issue of what kind of world we want to live in must be debated, as we have for some time now, been driven by the combination of argument from the economic rationalists and a multitude of groups having differing points of view in relation to the environment, social behaviour and social structure. We must as a profession, make our contribution and put the issues that are pertinent to us to the fore, ensuring that we have a role in the process of building the world in which we live.

I'm sure that our Conference Convenor, Nova Fariss will welcome any input from members as it is a complex and difficult task to organise a Branch conference. Our Branch conferences over the years have grown in both scope and size.

The Branch is also developing a rudimentary plan for the next two years. For this purpose the Branch committees will be brought together to make suggestions about future directions and priorities within their areas of expertise.

To ensure a rapid response to issues through the media the Branch has put in place a procedure, whereby our Executive Officer makes initial contact with the President who then has a responsibility to consult with the relevant Vice President. In the absence of a relevant Vice President, The President will consult with the Convenor of the relevant Sub-Committee and prepare an immediate response for the media. It is important to remember that to meet the deadlines of the written media, you usually get know no more than 15 minutes for a quick response.

For our profession to be visible and active we have to strike quickly and have a procedure that facilitates that quick strike. In the absence of the President, the Executive Officer will contact the Vice President Professional Practice and Ethics, who will follow the same protocol as the President in consulting with the relevant Vice President or committee convenor. We hope that this will enable a quick response.

The importance of being able to respond quickly was evident in January, when for the first time in the history of the social work profession in WA social work got on the front page of *The West Australian*. To be

able to respond within fifteen minutes, enabled both the opportunity to be interviewed for a page ten response and to have a letter to the Editor published. It is important that we do this and that we do this on issues central to both the profession and its activities.

You are all urged once again to ensure that you make contact with the relevant committees and sub-committees when any issue you want taken up comes to mind. You have a right for your voice to be heard, and it is also imperative that the Branch uses the expertise of its members in its public profiling.

This is our 50th Anniversary, we have for the first month of this year managed front page, all be it in a rather negative sense, but nevertheless if the written media are prepared to headline social work, then it is clear that there is some recognition in the community of what our profession is about. Of course this image may be somewhat negative (Rottweilers and all) but it is up to us in this our 50th Anniversary year to turn that around and in so doing ensure that the issues of greatest importance to the profession such as, social justice, equality, fairness, as well as self determination are enshrined within the structure of our civil society.

In closing, a small comment about the recent advertisement for Chief Executive Officer of the National Association. As all those who read the President's Report in every second newsletter and the report of National Directors' Meetings, will have noted that the Association has failed, although extensively advertising to fill the position, in appointing a Chief Executive Officer. The National Association decided to place the appointment of a person in the hands of an agency on this occasion.

It must also be remembered, and this has been reported in previous missives from my desk, that the position is not necessarily one that requires social work skills, but one that requires good management and organisational ability, good financial management ability, knowledge of small information technology systems and experience in public relations.

The Association has worked for five years on the good will of its voluntary labour. At the national level, this is self limiting and for us to operate satisfactorily within the current milieu, it is imperative that we employ somebody who can organise, manage and ensure that the Association remains focussed and economically viable.

The employment of a social worker in the past may have been useful in our formative years but it had a down side. If a social workers is to be employed by the AASW they are immediately disenfranchised as a member as they cannot be on the one hand an employee and the other represented by the organisation. The resignation of the previous Executive Officer was a trauma that none of us who were involved would ever

*Continued on page 3*

# COMING EVENTS

**Carers Association of Australia Annual Conference**  
**"It's About Time... Respite For Carers"**  
28-29 March 1996, Canberra  
Contact: (06) 285.3000

**Transpersonal Counselling & Psychotherapy**  
**A Support and Supervision Workshop for Practitioners**  
19 April 1996. \$100  
Facilitated by Joy Allen, Elizabeth Grace and Dr Loretta do Rozario  
**Healing the Healer: Replenishing the Spirit**  
20-21 April 1996  
Facilitated by Joy Allen and Dr Loretta do Rozario. \$150  
Contact: Dr Loretta do Rozario ph/fax - 3392312

**Break Even National Practitioners Conference**  
**Emerging Practices in Working with Gambling Problems**  
1-4 May 1996  
Mermaid Waters Resort, Gold Coast, Queensland  
Contact: Russ Fraser Tel: (07) 5575 6122 or Fax: (07) 5575 6133

**Confronting Abuse the Way Forward**  
Presented by the NSW Advisory Committee on Abuse of Older People  
in their Homes  
May 2-3, 1996 - The Wesley Centre, Sydney  
Contact: (02) 367 6836

**The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards**  
**Perspectives on Performance**  
31 July - 2 August 1996 - Hilton on the Park, Melbourne  
Contact: Joanne Booth - Tel: (03) 9417 5488 or Fax: (03) 9417 1923

**2nd National Regional Conference**  
Bunbury, Western Australia  
23 - 26 September 1996  
Contact: Associate Professor Richard Hugman, Edith Cowan University,  
Robertson Drive, Bunbury 6230 or Fax: (097) 216 994.

***Social work private practice handbook:  
setting up in private practice  
by Curt Fisher and Martin Prescott***

This book answers many of the questions people have about getting started in private practice. Both authors are members of the AASW and have run seminars for social workers wishing to establish themselves in private practice.

Any person wanting to order copies of the handbook can send their name, address and a cheque for \$15 (includes postage) to either:

Curt Fisher & Associates, 81 Beach Road,  
Mentone, Vic, 3194 or MJ & AMJ Prescott, PO  
Box 31, Bentleigh, Vic, 3204

A 4 day workshop, June 21-24

with **Greg Johanson**

psychotherapy trainer, Baptist Minister and author of

## **"Grace Unfolding:**

**Psychotherapy in the Spirit of the Tao-te Ching"**



An Hakomi workshop for professionals who want to explore how contemplative states of consciousness potentiate awareness; how respect and non-doing leads to much being done; how supporting defences leads most quickly to their being let down; and how focusing on the body provides both increased unity and a royal road to the unconscious.

Meet Greg at the Well Bookshop T:(09) 382 4747  
Wednesday Evening June 19

**All other enquiries**  
**Beth Taylor (09) 335 1016**

## **50th Anniversary State Conference 1996**

The *call for papers* has been distributed to all members and agencies throughout the State.

Did you notice the new section on *Poster Presentations*?

The Conference Committee hopes that you will think laterally about this concept and that there will be an innovative display.

If you wish to discuss your ideas, please call the Conference Convenor Nova Fariss on 458 5333 (W), or the Conference Project Officer Marian Maughan on 330 2585.

# Extra! Extra! Read all about it!

**Continued from page 1**

want to repeat again. Much of that trauma was due to the fact that the person was both an employee and a member.

It is also important to note that most professional associations seek in their executive staff, management, administration, public relations and skill in information technology as their essential requirements. We are no different.

It is important that we fill this position, and that we fill this position with a person with the appropriate skills. It might also be of interest to members to know that this does not exclude someone with so-

cial work qualifications, but like all other professional associations who operate in a similar fashion to ours there are more important qualifications and relevant experience than that normally gained in the practice of social work.

In closing, I would like to thank Roma Lewi for agreeing to convene the Branch 50th Anniversary Committee. Roma comes with extensive experience and commitment to both the profession and the Association. You are urged and encouraged to support Roma in making sure that this our 50th Anniversary is truly a momentous year.

**BRIAN WOOLLER**

## The West Australian ESTABLISHED 1833 PERTH SATURDAY JANUARY 6 1996 11 992 Pages Including Litours METRO

# Social workers' boss enters court power trip: court

The West Australian 6 January 1996

By LIBBY GORDEN

SOCIAL workers stopped a caring and devoted father getting unsupervised access to his two young children for a year, despite a court finding he had been wrongly accused of sexually abusing them.

A Children's Court magistrate has accused Family and Children's Services social workers involved in the case of being more concerned with their own power and authority than the interests of the children.

Margaret Jacqueline Musk was scathing in her criticism of the department, saying it did not have the authority to act in its own interests and that of the children's welfare at least.

"The evidence I have heard from the departmental officers reveals that they are more concerned with the success of their own power and authority than the interests of the children and their welfare at least."

Ms Musk made her comments after a five-day hearing last month when she granted an application by the father to have the children.

The family cannot be identified for legal reasons. Twelve months earlier, the department had successfully applied for a two-year care and protection order to remove the children from both parents.

It was alleged they had created the evidence of abuse, fully applied for a two-year care and protection order to remove the children from both parents.

Ms Musk said her comments were a warning to the department that it should be more concerned with the interests of the children and their welfare at least.

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# Social workers' boss enters court row

By CATHERINE FITZPATRICK

FAMILY and Children's Services social workers do not have the authority to decide from court recommendations in child protection cases, contrary to what Children's Court Judge Robert Fisher said last week.

But department director-general Robert Fisher said that, in exceptional circumstances, decisions to ignore court recommendations could be made at a director level - when it was considered to be in the best interests of the child.

His comments came after scathing criticism of the department's social workers by a Children's Court magistrate last week.

Despite repeated requests from Family and Children's Services Minister Cheryl Edwards last week, Mr Fisher said that, in exceptional circumstances, decisions to ignore court recommendations could be made at a director level - when it was considered to be in the best interests of the child.

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The West Australian 11 January 1996

# AASW 50th Anniversary A Time for Celebration



This year the AASW celebrates its Golden Anniversary

All Branches are developing plans for the year, with the dual purpose of recognising the contribution of the AASW as well as a means of promoting the profession.

Nationally *Social Work Week* will be held from 23 to 27 September 1996. In Western Australia we have timed our State Conference to coincide with this week, when we will also hold our 50th Anniversary Dinner.

**The Branch is seeking -**

- ➔ Expressions of Interest
- ➔ Creative Ideas
- ➔ Novel Notions



The Branch will be developing initiatives such as a commemorative issue of the newsletter. Other ideas that could be taken up at a local level are:

- ☺ Arranging a display in the local hospital/major agency/library
- ☺ Planting trees for the environment in the wheat belt
- ☺ Posters prepared by school children for a local festival eg Shinju Matsuri
- ☺ Seek out people with acting skills for a light hearted presentation
- ☺ Sponsoring an art display eg Aboriginal Art in the Goldfields.

Can you help with any of these? Do these examples give you other ideas? Perhaps AASW members in a suburb, country town or agency could come together to plan a local event which could also involve the local media.

**Please send your suggestions and/or offers of help ASAP to -**

*50th Anniversary Committee, AASW (WA Branch), PO Box 198, West Perth 6872 Fax: (09) 444 5410  
or contact*

*Roma Lewi, Convenor 50th Anniversary Committee (WA Branch), Fax: (09) 364 2506*

## ***New Members***

Kylie Matthews (Student - UWA)  
Graham Chandler (FCS Mirrabooka)

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