

AASW

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

President's Report

The Planning for the State Conference to be held 19 - 21 August 1997 is well underway. The title is "Who's In & Who's Out - The Place of Ethics in Our Society". This is a timely conference title with a focus and follow on from the previous two years where we focused on the issue of privatisation and last year on the notion of the civil society.

Significantly, we appear to have the conflictual situation of a social movement that on the one hand is predicated on deregulation and on the other a preoccupation with ethics. Particularly noticeable, is the deregulation of business, business activity and of the money market with at the same time an interest in ethics and ethical behaviour. This is in some ways contradictory. Unfortunately, any process of deregulation lends itself to exploitation by the unscrupulous or unethical. Questions need to be asked about whether or not ethical behaviour can be regulated either internally or externally and whether there can be any degree of surety on the moral base upon which ethical behaviour ensures a minimisation of "ethical deviance".

It is hoped that members will get behind our Conference Convenor, Daphne Cross and her Project Officer, Marian Maughan in this planning stage and respond to the call for papers that was circulated recently. I'm aware that the deadline for proposals is the 5 March, but I am sure that a little bit of lee way (mind you only a little bit of lee way) will be allowed.

On the 30 December I wrote a letter of concern to the Premier in relation to some of the rumours abounding about structural changes and amalgamations for Family and Children Services and the subsets of the Ministry of Justice. To the date of publication of this newsletter, I have not received a reply. Significantly the Juvenile Justice and Community Based Corrections, sections of the Ministry of Justice, have been amalgamated into one administrative structure.

This is particularly worrying at a time when the community view expressed via both the electronic and written media is that crime appears to be solely the purview of juveniles. Unfortunately, the dangers inherent in this amalgamation along with a predominant community view and political position by both major parties in relation to law and order, has consequences for the care and protection of young people. The increasing call for blood, such as we have seen recently with comments from Carnarvon and

Broome, and political statements by both the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier, is a worrying development. Social workers will need to be clear in taking a stand on issues of social justice particularly in relation to children, their powerlessness and the role and responsibilities of the State.

It is also worth noting that the unemployed have yet again come in for a little bit of stick with regard to the Commonwealth Government's approach to skill training and employment.

We probably need in our respective work places, with our respective interests, to develop some clear strategic approach as social workers for dealing with the emergence of strong conservative reactionary views. We are often too ready to be silent or acquiesce in the hope that things will change. We need to put ourselves to the forefront of change, and as your President, I would welcome any support or assistance in ensuring that our voice is heard and matters of social concern given some prominence.

The National Association will be shortly embarking on a strategic planning exercise and not withstanding some of the important professional developments the Association has embarked upon such as Continuing Professional Development and Entry Pathways, here is a chance for members to make their comment about the future direction of the Association and the profession.

Elsewhere in this newsletter, the questions that we will be asking have been reprinted and I would welcome any comment or point of view that members would like conveyed to the strategic planning meeting of Directors to be held in Canberra in April. I will attempt to represent your views as fairly as possible. The membership has an opportunity to make direct input into the planning process both via the Committee of Management of the Branch, and later on I believe, through an individual questionnaire.

BRIAN WOOLLER

Tributes to social work intervention at Gracetown

Tributes have been paid to social workers who responded to the Gracetown beach tragedy in November 1996, when adults and children were injured or killed during a rock slide while watching a surf carnival. The skills and commitment of social workers and their professional colleagues have been acknowledged in the local community and wider afield.

Special mention is made of the involvement of Sue Ash, then the Manager of the local district office of Family and Children's Services, Jenny Monson of South West Counselling and Valda Duffield, Social Worker at the Bunbury Office of the Department of Social Security.

A Late Afternoon Workshop (coming soon)

14 May 1997

Has your role in the workplace changed between the time you graduated as a social worker and now?

How do you present your skills and experiences in today's economic and competitive work environment?

Did you join the workplace as a social worker thinking you would stay in that employment?

For social workers employed in -

- State government
- Commonwealth government
- non government sector

Learn the language of a changing work environment to -

- address complex selection criteria
- know about effectiveness indicators
- describe comprehensive and transferable practice skills
- communicate what you do with clients rather than talking about clients themselves
- use reframing to describe what we do in today's labour market language

The CPE Committee is wanting some indication of interest. If you are interested and considering attending please contact -

Anne Pickard 273 0253 (w) or 385 1960 (h)
Lyn Selepak 426 9296 (w) or 271 6573 (h)

Sue commented on the value of the community development training she had received in her social work course. She was the coordinator of the human resource services provided to the families affected by the tragedy. Sue said the social workers involved took a leadership role, pulling other professional groups together to respond speedily and strategically to the needs of the affected families and other local people. Jenny Monson has maintained an ongoing involvement with the people recovering from the trauma.

The Department of Social Security recognised Valda Duffield's role by awarding her an Australia Day Achievement Medallion. The citation read:

"Valda is a Social Worker at Bunbury Office who, following the Gracetown beach disaster in November 1996 spent several weeks providing a range of DSS services to the victims and their families. With the assistance of other Bunbury staff Valda initiated contact with all the families and individuals involved, making home visits in many cases to ensure that they were fully aware of all relevant DSS services and that any adjustments to existing payments were handled with sensitivity and care. Valda consulted widely with other authorities involved in assisting with the recovery, and liaised directly with all the community support groups to ensure appropriate assistance was provided to those affected. Valda showed great initiative and skill in the way she responded to the event. With the support of other Bunbury staff Valda presented an efficient, caring and positive image of the Department and represented DSS with distinction."

The AASW compliments Sue, Jenny and Valda on a job well done.

State Conference 1997

IT'S NOT TOO LATE!

Are you thinking about offering a paper for the Conference? The "Call for Papers" is available in agencies. Send in your ideas - we would like to hear from you.

Or

Do you know someone who is doing some innovative work that would make a good basis for a paper or a workshop? Encourage them to submit their ideas or advise the Conference Convenor Daphne Cross on telephone 222 2816 of the Project Officer Marian Maughan on 330 2585.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY REUNION TO CELEBRATE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE AASW

On Wednesday, 18 December 1996, an afternoon tea function was held to bring together social workers, welfare officers and past administrative staff of the Social Work Section. Those who attended included social workers who had established the Social Work Section in the 1950s, and developed the service through to the present day.

The organisers wanted to give past social workers the chance to meet up again and this aim was achieved with guests still catching up at 5.45 pm, despite the malfunctioning airconditioning and an outdoor temperature of over 100 degrees Fahrenheit. The second purpose of the function was to gather some historical information on the Social Work Services over the years, especially as the social work profession was celebrating its 50 years of service in Australia, as indicated by the exhibition of the Branch 50th Anniversary banner.

The inaugural social worker of the Service in the then Department of Social Services, was Betty Spurgeon (nee Bate) who unfortunately was not able to travel from NSW for the occasion but sent her greetings and regrets. Over the years since then social workers have made a substantial contribution to the Department,

subsequently renamed Social Security, through case-work, community development work, management, policy development, and training. In the 1970s, departmental social workers were involved in the Australian Assistance Plan, and the development of the Melville Rehabilitation Service before that was taken over by the Commonwealth Department of Community Services.

Barbara Evans headed the Service in the 1950s. She remembered working at 99 Wellington Street, then the Murray Street site in Perth, and having a young student named Brian Wooller. In his address to the gathering, Brian remembered being admonished by Barbara for lounging on the desk in a "less than professional manner" while talking to the clerical staff.

Joan White (featured in the photo with Barbara Evans) worked at DSS and the Melville Rehabilitation Centre and remembered the decentralisation of the social work service as regional offices were established. Joan remembered colleagues Jutta Condos, who started the (now defunct) Social Work Student Unit, Phyllis Costello who initially came to WA as a cadet social worker from Melbourne, and Carina Green.

Lorraine Price's association with the Department dated back to the 1950s as a student "on prac" in Adelaide. Lorraine then headed the Social Work Section between 1980 and 1987. Other heads of the Section attending the celebration were Carina Green and Bob Mahar.

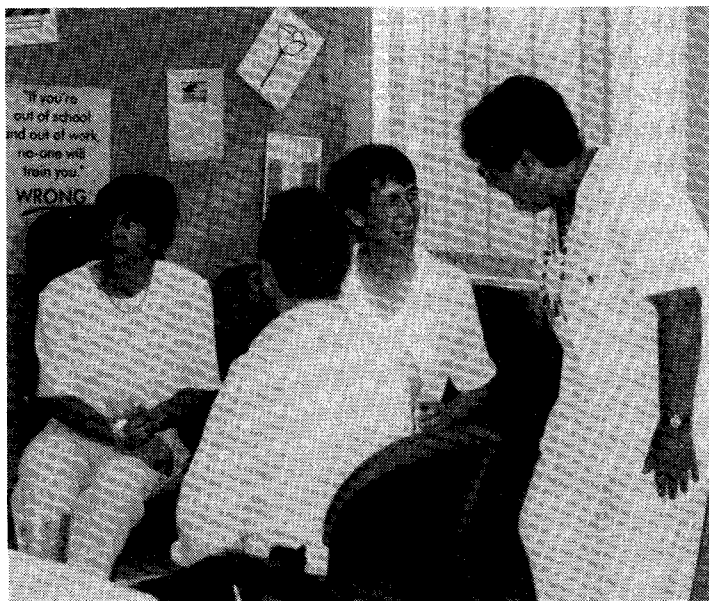
Robyn Lochore (appearing in the group photo with Jim Lyle, Anne Cutler and Carina Green on page 4) was a keen and enthusiastic cadet social work graduate from Queensland in the 1970s. Work practices have changed considerably since then, when duty comprised two days in the office to see clients who attended the 104 Murray Street, Perth office, and then were referred "upstairs" to see a



L-R: Barbara Evans and Joan White

social worker. Of the remainder of the week, two days were spent "on the road" doing home visits between Perth and Serpentine, then Fremantle and Medina, and one day writing up reports.

The organisers and participants agreed they had



L-R: Robyn Lochore, Jim Lyle (back), Ann Cutler and Carina Green at DSS reunion

NEW GRADUATES SUB-COMMITTEE Now meets on a monthly basis

An opportunity for -

- ◆ peer support
- ◆ networking
- ◆ professional development
- ◆ continuing education
- ◆ resourcing (employment)
- ◆ interest groups
- ◆ socialising
- ◆ fun activities

Contact

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enjoyed the opportunity to catch up, to talk about their contribution to the work of the Department and to acknowledge the experience they had gained thereby.

DAVID ARMSTRONG

ROBYN LOCHORE

ANNE PICKARD

NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING MEETING

The National Association will be holding a Strategic Planning Meeting in April with the aim of setting the direction of the Association for the next three to five years. The Directors have been requested to provide opportunities for the general membership to provide their views on some of the broader issues that impact on the Association and the profession.

All members are invited to attend a special meeting of the Branch Committee of Management to be held on Monday 17 March to assist the Branch Committee in this process. The majority of this meeting (6.00 pm to 7.00 pm) will be devoted to addressing the following six questions:

1. Describe what might be the future trends and developments in social work generally in Australia and globally in the next century.
2. What are the ethical issues of the next decade that social workers will need to deal with?
3. Identify the key issues social workers need to address in their jobs in the next three years.
4. What are the strengths and weaknesses of AASW?
5. List the five most important functions you feel AASW should carry out to address the key issues identified in Question Three above.
6. Are there any particular issues in undertaking social work practice that you believe apply specifically to your region and are unlikely to apply to other parts of Australia? Please highlight these and explain.

The meeting will be held in Conference Room 1, 4th Floor, Lotteries House, 79 Stirling Street, Perth.

If you are unable to attend the meeting you may wish to forward your ideas to Brian Wooller by Friday, 14 March, C/- PO Box 198, West Perth 6872.