

# Branch Social Work Awards

For many years the WA Branch of the AASW has presented an annual award to a final year social work student at each of the two Schools of Social Work. The award recipients are selected by each School on the basis of academic excellence.

In recent times the awards have been presented at the Branch's annual general meeting, held in the latter part of the year immediately prior to the State Conference Dinner. For some time the Branch has felt that the presentations occurred too long after graduation, which occurs around late March to early April. There was also concern that the awards did not have sufficient prominence amid the bustle of annual general meeting and conference agendas.

In the middle of 1997 the Finance Committee requested the Vice President for Education to examine the possibility of creating a different context for the student awards. Following discussion by the Committee of Management, a working group was formed in September 1997 to advance this agenda. The working group was convened by Lynn Selepak and included Virginia Scott, Chris Coopes, Peter Clissa and Naomi Shattock.

In addition to the student awards, the group discussed and pursued the possibility of bringing to fruition earlier efforts to introduce awards for AASW members who had achieved excellence in their fields of endeavour. From early 1998 the working group's ideas were operationalised with the assistance of Liz Retamal, the Branch's Executive Officer.

The planning culminated in a very successful event on 7 April at the Broadwater Pagoda Hotel in Como. The intent was to attract a high profile speaker and the Branch was delighted that Sir Ronald Wilson accepted its invitation.

Brian Wooller, Branch President, introduced Sir Ronald, providing interesting information about his early life and multiple achievements. Some biographical details and key points from Sir Ronald's speech on Aboriginal reconciliation are included in this newsletter.

Where to from here? With the introduction of a third School of Social Work at Edith Cowan University's Bunbury Campus, the WA Branch looks forward to conferring a third student award. Like the student awards, the inaugural Social Work Awards for Excellence for AASW members will become an annual tradition. The Branch anticipates many similarly successful events in the future.

I would like to particularly thank all those who participated in the working group; Virginia Scott and Chris Coopes for their energy and commitment in finalising the Awards for Excellence; Margaret Stockton-Metcalf, Pattie Benjamin and others for their early work on awards for excellence, and Liz Retamal for her efficient executive support in the crucial later stages.

**LYNN SELEPAK, VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION  
CONVENOR OF WORKING PARTY**

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## Sir Ronald Wilson

Sir Ronald Darling Wilson's early life was one of considerable sorrow and hardship. At the age of 4 years his mother died and when he was 7 his father suffered a stroke, spending the next 5 years in a hospice 300 miles from their home. Sir Ronald left school at the age of 14 and took up a position as messenger with the Geraldton Local Court, the very beginning of what was to be a distinguished legal career.

During World War II he flew Spitfires over Great Britain as a pilot in the Royal Australian Airforce. At the end of the war, returning home and enrolling in the university on a scholarship. He graduated in 1949 from the University of Western Australia with a Bachelor of Law. In 1951 he was admitted as a barrister and solicitor and then traveled to the United States where he gained a Master of Law in 1957 from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1963 Sir Ronald became a Queen's Counsel and between 1969 and 1979 he served as Solicitor-General in Western Australia.

In 1979 he was appointed Justice of the High Court of Australia, holding this position until 1989. Sir Ronald maintained his links with universities and from 1980 to 1995 he was Chancellor of Murdoch University. 1990 saw the appointment of Sir Ronald by the Federal Labor Government to the position of President of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. He retired from this position on the 31 July 1997.

Sir Ronald has always had a commitment to justice and to social justice and has served the Australian community in a singular way. This has been acknowledged by being awarded a number of significant honours.

Sir Ronald married Leila Smith in April 1950 and has five children and nine grandchildren. He has a lifetime of commitment to the Australian community. In recent time he has been to the forefront of the movement for reconciliation in Australia. Sir Ronald Wilson is a truly great Australian.

## Key Points made by Sir Ronald Wilson

During the 1980s Sir Ronald Wilson became involved in the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The background to the Commission hinged around events in Roebourne, Western Australia, where an Aboriginal man died in police custody. Five policemen were acquitted of the death. The events generated great public concern and resulted in the Royal Commission being set up.

The Royal Commission clearly identified why so many Aborigines were in goal. Generations of young Aborigines had been removed from their homes and alienated from their families. For instance there was the case of Malcolm – alienated from his family

and community from an early age – who gouged out his eye and committed suicide while in custody.

Despite the Royal Commission and commitments by all governments in Australia, little has changed. The rate of deaths in custody has increased, indicating that this is a serious and continuing social problem.

In 1991 the Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation was set up, with the support of every political party. Sir Ronald noted that it is significant, and sad, that the Wik legislation has not progressed likewise. Parliament acknowledged the past occupation of land by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders thousands of years before white settlement forcibly occupied the land, without compensation or consultation. Reconciliation would be based on recognition of the culture and history of Torres Strait Islanders and indigenous people.

The Council's aim was to promote a process of reconciliation between Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and the wider community, along with the need for compensation and support. Indigenous people are regarded around the world as holding a unique position and are taking an active role in world wide reconciliation.

The Council is now into its seventh year and has made considerable progress. The first target was to get reconciliation onto the agenda, and this has been achieved. The reconciliation process is appreciated by Australian society and there is an understanding of the uniqueness of Aboriginal society. Australians experienced huge pride in Cathy Freeman's Olympic triumph, when she draped herself in the Aboriginal flag during her victory lap.

In 1995 Joan Kirner took a committee around Australia and consulted with people about what they wanted most for the year 2000. There was a ground swell in favour of reconciliation as a theme for celebrating the year 2000. During some days spent together, various groups began to be supportive, including mining and cattleman. The whole process was very successful.

The stolen children report, *Bringing them home*, was launched and was very well received by the community.

A national *Sorry Day* is to be held on 26 May 1998. The 'sorry day' was recommended by the Human Rights Commission. The day should have been the initiative of non Aborigines all around Australia, however when government prevaricated, indigenous people took control. They said it should be a day for both sides to commemorate the sufferings of the indigenous peoples – a day when all Australians will commemorate this shameful part of our history and express our sorrow. It is a day for commemorating past and present generations of stolen children.

There is a national organising committee which will be honouring fellow indigenous people. The Committee is working on celebrations in schools, a picnic in Canberra and other events. Recommendations of *Bringing them home* include family reunions. The committee hopes to take some aged Aborigines to the homelands from which they were arbitrarily removed.

The three key words of reconciliation are acknowledgement, unity and commitment. Sir Ronald feels that this decade is the most exciting one for reconciliation. Mabo signified the difference between relying on welfare and having legal rights. Hopefully Wik will be peacefully and harmoniously worked out. We now have an enormous chance to make a difference and social workers have the opportunity to be part of it.

## President's Report

On the 26<sup>th</sup> May this year there is the National Sorry Day. This day is of considerable importance to the reconciliation process in Australia and the Branch has decided to participate in this process and produce a Sorry Book. You will notice enclosed with the newsletter is a page for the Sorry Book and it would be appreciated if members could sign their name and return the page no later than the 15<sup>th</sup> May to the Branch address, PO Box 198, West Perth 6872, to allow for the compilation of the pages into a bound Sorry Book.

The Branch will also hold an early evening function on the 26 May at which a number of speakers will talk about their social work experience, and we will complete the ceremonial handover of the Sorry Book to our indigenous colleagues. All members are invited to attend – further details are elsewhere in this newsletter. The Branch is inviting all social workers in WA of indigenous descent, to attend.

This last month has seen a particularly sad occasion on the Australian waterfront. Whatever one might think of the union movement and union workers on the waterside there is no doubt the confrontational and aggressive approach by government on this issue is particularly un-Australian and worrying in the context of our democracy.

It is also of considerable concern to hear politicians justifying their actions by virtue of the laws they have passed. This of course is not new, it has happened in other places at other times. To be law abiding to unjust and immoral laws is also, and has been judged, to be unacceptable.

It was the miners at Eureka that railed against, what were at the times, unfair laws targeting people who

*Continued on page 13*

# Quality Practice Options

## Quality Practice Options Discussion Paper and Questionnaire

### A Branch Information Forum

**Wednesday, 13 May**

**5.30 – 7.00 pm**

**4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, Lotteries  
House, 79 Stirling Street, Perth**

**Friday, 22 May**

**from 12 noon to 2.00 pm**

**Bunbury**

Influence the direction of your Association!

The Australian Association of Social Workers is preparing for the next millennium where social workers enhance their competitiveness in the work place with up to date knowledge and skills and are fully accountable for their practice.

The Quality Practice Options paper proposes four ways in which this may be achieved. What you want counts! Make sure you respond to the questionnaire in the Quality Options document.

The forums will provide an opportunity to discuss the paper and help you decide where the Association should go from here.

**For further information contact**

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# 1998 Awards for Excellence

Six awards were made at the inaugural Social Work Awards for Excellence presentation held on Tuesday 7 April 1998.

Each award winner was of a high calibre and this was reflected in their comments as they accepted their award and in the warm acknowledgement of the 73 members and friends who attended the presentations.

The award winners were:

- ◆ Brian Wooller
- ◆ Jan Roberts
- ◆ Steve Edwards
- ◆ Greg Swensen
- ◆ Warwick Smith
- ◆ Pauline Meemeduma

Full details of the Awards policy and presentation arrangement were included in the December issue of *The West Australian Social Worker* and readers may like to refer back to this.

However, to refresh the memory, award categories are:

- ◆ Professional Practice
- ◆ Ethics
- ◆ Innovation/pioneering
- ◆ Management
- ◆ Policy Development
- ◆ Contribution to Learning
- ◆ Research, and
- ◆ Leadership.

Each category has a number of criteria or indicators of excellence. It is with pleasure that we now introduce the award winners and their achievements.

## BRIAN WOOLLER

Brian Wooller was nominated for an award in the category of Leadership by Dr Barbara Meddin.

Brian in his capacity as Branch President and in his employment, has demonstrated outstanding leadership to the profession, provided a high profile for professional social work and has routinely been available to support members of the profession in addressing professional and ethical issues. He is also routinely available to advocate for individual social workers and can be counted on to be the public voice of the profession.

In making the award, the panel acknowledge that Brian has provided outstanding leadership in many ways.

He has been president of the WA Branch for three separate terms. He was first president in 1971-72, followed by a term from 1982-85. His third and current term commenced in 1994.

He has also held positions as secretary of the Branch from 1960-1970 and 1972-1980, and served as Vice President between 1978-79 and during 1987. From 1985 to 1987 he was the Convenor of the Professional Practice and Ethics Committee and was National Treasurer of the AASW from 1985-92.

During all his terms as Branch President, he served as a member of the National Board. In 1978 he actually put the concept of life long learning on the AASW's agenda as one mechanism for self regulation. That concept came to fruition nearly 20 years later as the AASW's Continuing Professional Education Policy.

During his second term as Branch President, his leadership firmly established the Branch sponsoring state conferences, which today remains as one of the key continuing education activities of the Branch.

### Photo 1 Brian Wooller

It was during his term as National Treasurer that he was integral in establishing the infra structure at the national level that resulted in financial accountability and stability for the Association.

During his current term as Branch President he has continued to demonstrate such leadership, resulting in the WA Branch not only being financially sound, but in achieving the financial security that has enabled the Branch to engage in much of the proactive projects and activities that are so richly appreciated by Branch members and the professional community.

He is the WA Branch's public voice on controversial and sensitive issues impacting on the profession, on individual social workers or on those who are clients of the social work profession. He can always be counted on to take the ethical and professional stands that are necessary to support workers, clients and the profession regardless of the personal cost to himself.

His response to issues related to the social work profession always reflects clear leadership, a clear articulation of profes-

sional social work practice and consistency with the values and attitudes of the profession.

Routinely, members of our profession turn to him for advice in dealing with difficult professional situations or for advice regarding ethical dilemmas. He can always be counted on to provide sensitive and strategic advice in these matters.

In his role as a social worker and as a manager in major government departments in WA he has supported his staff through some very difficult times in the profession and in their professional lives, ensuring that their legal and industrial rights were protected.

He provides an outstanding role model for members of the profession, be it mentoring new graduates or supporting social workers long standing in the profession.

In addition to the role Teddy Stockbridge played in Brian's career, Brian indicates that his grandfather, who was involved in the trade union movement, has been a major influence in his life. Brian says that he personally believes that being true to one's principles is the most important thing. The principles to which Brian has been true are those of the social work profession.

The award honours Brian with the WA Branch's first Social Work Award for Excellence in Leadership.

## JAN ROBERTS

Jan Roberts was nominated for an award in the categories of Professional Practice and Pioneering/Innovation. Jan was nominated by Jennifer Preen on behalf of the Social Work Department, Royal Perth Hospital, Shenton Park Campus.

Jan was nominated for an award because of her outstanding clinical skills and innovative approach to working with clients.

She commenced her working career as a nurse before becoming a Family Welfare Officer with the then Department of Community Welfare. In 1975 she commenced studying social work at Curtin University demonstrating a quest for enhanced knowledge and skills that is still a hallmark of her clinical practice today. She initially worked in the area of community development and then accepted a social work position with Royal Perth Hospital working on medical and cardiology units.

**Photo 2**  
**Jan Roberts**

Whilst working in the cardiology unit she undertook research into the compliance behaviour of heart surgery patients, the findings of which were used as a basis for introducing pre-admission discharge planning. As well as her work as a practicing clinician, she also held supervisory and team manager roles and was Acting Deputy Chief Social Worker for two and a half years.

In 1993 Jan decided to return to clinical practice and accepted a part-time position with the Rehabilitation Medicine Unit at the Shenton Park Campus of Royal Perth Hospital. Her decision was based upon a commitment to working at the grass roots level with clients and a desire to further her knowledge and skills.

The clients of this Unit are primarily persons with acquired brain injury, chronic illness, chronic pain and chronic pain with drug dependency issues. As such they are often severely debilitated or have been left with long term cognitive deficits. Consequently there is often a resultant loss of personal resources to initiate processes towards advocating for themselves in the financial, legal and service provision arenas. Features of Jan's work in the unit include:

- Advocating strongly on behalf of these clients, exploring all possible avenues, resources, entitlements and alternatives within systems to facilitate maximum advantage and outcomes for them.
- Protecting the best interests of persons with acquired brain injury, accompanying them to meetings held with government, statutory/non-statutory, private and legal agencies, lobbying, mediating and advocating on their behalf.
- Consistently using all contact with the wider community to highlight the impact of acquired brain injury on individuals and their families.
- Taking a holistic approach with her clients. Aside from working with core social work issues, she is sensitive to the aspirations of people with illness and disability and seeks to support them to realise these. Such sensitivity has seen her facilitating opportunities for one client to attend art courses, another to write a book of her experience recovering from a stroke and yet another to commence studying for a social work degree.
- Considering the implications of significant legislative changes to the Workers' Compensation Act in 1993. It became apparent that some clients would be unable to manage the new system or would have reduced opportunities as a result of system changes. Whilst acknowledging the implications for clients, she also acknowledged the implications for herself as a practitioner in this area and sought to equip herself with the knowledge and skills required to practice creatively within a process of change. This led to her undertaking conflict resolution training, negotiation training and alternative dispute resolution training and subsequently becoming an accredited mediator.

- Facilitating negotiation and training workshops for the Staff Development Section of Royal Perth Hospital and coordinating a mediation training forum at the AASW (WA) State Conference in 1996. She has also been involved in contributing to a government review of vocational rehabilitation in an attempt to have social workers included in the Workers' Compensation Act as allied health professionals who are able to charge for their services. The results of this review are still pending.
- Innovating at a systemic level. She approached the State Government Insurance Commission on behalf of the social work team at RPH and on behalf of individuals who were hospitalised as a result of motor vehicle accidents and who suffered ongoing problems as a result of their injuries. At a meeting with staff members of SGIC she reviewed several cases where a proactive approach had appeared to benefit accident victims and their families and the two organisations concerned. As a result of this meeting a pilot project was devised to both review the present situation and develop a model of working for the future.
- Using her skills in projects outside of the hospital e.g. facilitating negotiations between voluntary sector mental health services staff and their union representatives in developing award conditions for an enterprise agreement document. She has also been involved in providing consultancy mediation and conflict management for clinical staff of a country government hospital and victim/offender mediation.
- As a colleague being approachable, honest, supportive and empathetic and willing to consult in regard to the management of cases which feature motor vehicle compensation issues. Her knowledge of the legal and social implication for clients is invaluable. Her significant efforts in networking with other professionals and her knowledge of appropriate resources for these clients has been greatly utilised by her colleagues.

Jan describes her current social work position as privileged. She enjoys the support and challenge of working in a specialised team in a hospital environment. She feels that her experience as a social worker, together with her specific skills, allows her to work alongside clients in a manner which enables them to have control of the content whilst she assists in the management of the process.

The award recognises Jan's outstanding achievement in a number of areas, including her:

- ◆ commitment to learning;
- ◆ holistic and creative approach to working with clients;
- ◆ advocacy and negotiation achievements;
- ◆ work to bring about system changes; and
- ◆ strong, demonstrated professional achievement.

Above all she has gained an extremely high level of recognition from her colleagues and achieved real, tangible and positive outcomes for her clients.

## STEVE EDWARDS

Steve was nominated for an award in the category of Innovation/Pioneering by Joe Goerke, Program Manager, Centrecare and John Hancock from Family and Children's Services.

Steve was nominated for an award for conceiving the potential for applying Solution Focussed Brief Therapy to child protection and for pioneering a program to enable the full benefit of this to be realised.

**Photo 3**  
**Steve Edwards**

This has involved the creation of a program called *Signs of Safety* which is an innovative and cooperative approach to dealing with child protection cases. *Signs of Safety* involves a fundamental shift in attitude and skills for child protection workers. The program calls for them to identify and document times when a child is seen to be 'safe' in his or her home while still rigorously investigating allegations of abuse. It has been acknowledged internationally as a new approach to service delivery in child protection work.

The primary aim of this approach is for agency interventions to be more effective through gaining the cooperation of families by acknowledging their protective abilities as well as their shortcomings. This approach to child protection investigation and case work goes beyond the more traditional perspective of risk assessment as it facilitates work towards more positive outcomes for all involved – the child, the family and the statutory agency.

In 1992 Steve volunteered to work as a counsellor in Centrecare's Parent Teen Link team. He wanted to learn more about Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) which was then and still remains the major intervention model used by counsellors working in this area. Steve was attracted to learning better ways of helping clients identify their own solutions. This reflected his genuine commitment to helping clients develop both autonomy and responsibility and his respect for clients as equal partners in his work with them.

While continuing to work in the statutory department he quickly recognised the potential for applying the concepts of SFBT to the child protection investigations and interventions he was required to undertake. This began the application of social work skills and knowledge in a new and creative way. He found that it worked and sought to extend the potential benefits of the method to others.

An opportunity for a secondment to Centrecare opened up in 1992 and Steve jumped at the chance for full time work in the PTL team. When the special program ended after one year he gave up a permanent position in the public service and took a considerable drop in salary to follow his commitment to excellence in counselling and joined Centrecare on a permanent basis.

Features of his work on the concept include:

- Working with Andrew Turnell and Larry Hopwood in November 1993 to identify the process needed to fully develop *Signs of Safety*.
- Piloting a program in Northam in January 1994 through the Central District Office of Family and Children's Services.
- Preparation of a project workbook and several preparatory meetings with staff and management, joint work on the project commencing in Mid April and running for six months until mid October 1994. This was followed by two similar field trials in the Mandurah office of the Department, a follow up trial with Northam and two special practice trials with Perth metropolitan based child protection specialist workers.
- Five days of intensive training followed by six months of follow up consultation and supervision. This process helped further refine the program. As with the previous trials this part of the project was thoroughly researched so that the new initiative would be both reflective of basic values and principles as well as highly effective in practice.
- Winning of a Community Service Award. *Signs of Safety* won the child protection category in November that year. His contribution was essential to achieving this recognition.
- Practical application and testing at each stage. Steve comments that "Child protection social workers learn new skills and detailed ways of eliciting client input". It is one thing to say that clients can contribute towards the solution

of their own problems but it is another thing to have the practice skills needed to achieve it.

- Co-authoring with Andrew Turnell the *Signs of Safety Workbook*, a Centrecare publication and jointly wrote an article "Aspiring to Partnership, the Signs of Safety Approach to Child Protection" published in the prestigious British journal, *Child Abuse Review* 1997. Steve with Andrew, has also entered a contract with Nortons the US publishers to co-author a book on the method.
- Commencement of a relationship with the Bristol (UK) branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). That agency had developed a program, *Resolutions* which had been designed to enable effective work to be done with families where severe abuse is being denied. During 1997, Steve and Andrew have worked intensively with two child protection workers on a case which fits the above criteria and have further developed *Resolutions* for local circumstances, using many of the concepts and strategies of *Signs of Safety*.

The cooperative spirit of this enterprise involving three therapists in Bristol, two in Centrecare and two WA government department staff reflects the typical collegiate way in which Steve always works.

The award recognises Steve's very high level of commitment, expertise and creativity in the development of the approach and for pioneering the program so that its full benefit could be realised.

## GREG SWENSEN

Greg was nominated for an award in the category of Innovation/Pioneering by Brian Wooller, AASW (WA Branch) President.

Greg's nomination for an award recognises his significant contribution to the profession in the years he has edited and been the mainstay behind the Branch newsletter *The West Australian Social Worker*. The thrust and focus of the content of the newsletter and his preparedness to ensure that issues central to the profession at any given time, whether or not controversial, receive prominence, demonstrates his commitment to scholarship, communication and innovation. This has been enhanced by his considerable technical skills and consistency in producing a timely publication of high quality.

Greg has been a member of the Australian Association of Social Workers for 19 years. He was first involved on the Editorial Committee in 1984, taking over as Editor in 1985. His ability to, in the early days, use his knowledge and skills in desk top publishing and information technology, allowed the WA Branch to develop a newsletter, which was at that time second to none. At that early stage the quality was clearly evident. It is worth noting that as Editor he has never shied away from controversy and has

been prepared to ensure that issues central to the profession at any given time, receive prominence in *The West Australian Social Worker*.

Significantly, *The West Australian Social Worker* has been the leader in Branch newsletters throughout Australia in terms of its format, layout and content. The circulation of the newsletter is now to some 700 members. It has also been due to his stewardship that the publication has been seen as an attractive advertising medium for many other organisations.

**Photo 4  
Greg Swensen**

It is principally due to the quality and timeliness of the WA Branch newsletter that West Australian members are kept up to date not only with Branch activities but also with matters central to their professional practice. Greg has also been proactive in seeking out lead articles for the newsletter, that have been relevant and at times controversial social topics of the time.

Greg has continued in his innovative and exploratory fashion and is currently looking at the possibility of establishing a web site for the WA Branch to make available archive copies of newsletters, State Conference material and submissions. When this is developed it would, for instance, be a mechanism for members to lodge interest for CPE events.

The Branch has from time to time embarked on a number of publication ventures and is currently re-publishing *Incomes and Outcomes*. Greg's expertise will be used in the format and publication of the new edition. Notable is his skill and ability to use modern computer technology which has in many ways enhanced the WA Branch in its ability to both communicate with its growing membership and produce what is a quality face to the West Australian professional community.

The importance of the Branch publications cannot be underestimated and Greg's contribution has made the public face of the AASW in Western Australia as prominent as it is.

Innovation and energy have been the hallmark of Greg Swensen's contribution to social work in general and the Australian Association of Social Workers in particular.

The award acknowledges Greg's commitment, stewardship, clear focus on professional issues and scholarship, as well as his technical skills in consistently providing West Australian members with a pertinent, timely, high quality newsletter.

## WARWICK SMITH

Warwick was nominated for an award in the categories of Management (primary) and Innovation/Pioneering (secondary) by Chris Coopes.

Warwick is the Director of the Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service, a general management position.

Warwick Smith was the motivating force which led to the Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service winning the prestigious Australia and New Zealand Mental Health Services Gold Medal in 1997.

He has had a very broad range of experience in the mental health field and has worked at the (then) Community Psychiatry Division, Graylands Hospital, Warwick Clinic, Mental health Division and a number of positions including Director of Richmond Fellowship. He has been involved in many committees and working parties including the WACOSS Psychiatric Issues Working Party which led to the formation of the Psychiatric Emergency Team.

In 1994 Warwick was appointed Clinical Coordinator of the Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service. At the time staffing was minimal, providing a very basic adult psychiatric service.

This inadequate service covered approximately 50 square kilometres in an area with one of the most rapidly expanding populations in Australia. In 1992 a project team had produced a service development strategy but it was a long way from implementation.

Warwick immediately became involved in reviewing the service, consulted with all sectors of the local and broader community and tried to involve everyone in the development of services. The expansion in the range and depth of services has been quite outstanding. The following is a brief description of the service.

Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service provides a quality comprehensive catchment area service. Both the community and inpatient services are ACHS accredited. The Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service is based upon a model of a seamless, coordinated service that ensures continuity of care for clients whether they are receiving inpatient care or care in the community. Secure and open facilities are provided as well as an acute day program.

Targeted services include an acute team who deal with urgent assessments and ongoing management, an early episode psychosis program, a complex needs team for longer term intensive management, a postnatal depression project, Living Skills Centre, specialist clinical services and specialised psychological services to people from non English speaking backgrounds. Strong links have been developed with primary care services, particularly general practitioners via the local Division. An independent consumers and carers support group, Support In-Site Incorporated, has been developed.

**Photo 5**  
**Warwick Smith**

Warwick is presently implementing comprehensive services for older people with mental illness living in the south west metropolitan corridor.

Warwick has worked in a variety of settings in both government and non government and this has included convenor of a working party assessing accommodation needs of the mentally ill. This working party developed strong insectorial tasks and lead to the development of a number of accommodation and support services. He has worked on policy and planning matters in the Mental health Division, he has gone on study tours to agencies in other states and also had years of experience in hands-on work with the mentally ill.

When he took up his position in 1994, he had some firm ideas and concepts of needs and this was meshed with the project work

which had assessed needs in the region. Out of this, clear goals were set and strategies put into place to achieve those goals.

One of the most significant and innovative achievements of which Warwick was an instigator was the involvement of carers and consumers in planning services.

The carer and consumer body "Support In-Site Incorporated" was set up and has made major achievements. This is the only consumer/carer independent organisation in metropolitan Perth which resulted from an initiative by local community based psychiatric services. This was supported by a number of members of the Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service.

Warwick has displayed great tenacity and perseverance in working to achieve goals. This has been so successful that in 1997 the Rockingham Kwinana Psychiatric Service was awarded the prestigious Australian and New Zealand Mental health Services Gold Medal for achievement in providing a comprehensive catchment area service.

The previous Accommodation and Support projects in the North Metropolitan Area had previously received Gold and Silver medals for achievements in the THEMHS Awards.

Warwick has been recognised as an innovative leader in the mental health field for some time and changes he has worked on have been consistent with social work values, especially that the clients – in this case people with mental illness – have the right to dignity, self fulfillment and social justice. He has particularly recognised the needs of marginalised clients including people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with sever persistent mental illness and those of Aboriginal descent.

One of Warwick's qualities is that he always gives credit to others who have worked to effect change, and recognises that achievements are usually reached by people working as a team.

The award recognises Warwick's commitment and strong motivation to improve service delivery to meet client needs; also his vision and innovation in development significant new services in his region; including his ability to involve others as members of a team to achieve significant outcomes for clients.

**PAULINE MEEMEDUMA**

Pauline was nominated for an award in the category of Professional Practice by Helenmary Sykes, student social worker and practitioner with Family and Children's Services.

Pauline was nominated for an award for excellence in professional practice shown by her work with a family over a nine month period as the contracted non Department of Family and Children's Services social worker.

Her intervention with the family demonstrated:

# Student Awards

**Photo 6**  
**Pauline**  
**Meemeduma**

- ◆ high levels of social work skills in working with the family;
- ◆ a standard of excellence in outcome achievement with the mother and children;
- ◆ a passion and commitment to address the long history of disempowerment and disadvantage experienced by the family; and
- ◆ the integration of a high level of social work practice theory and child abuse knowledge, and an insistence on the utilisation of this knowledge to publicly inform and direct the case practice.

The award particularly recognises Pauline's ability to articulate goals and the theoretical background to her intervention as well as the value of this as a teaching resource.

These inaugural awards have clearly shown the excellence in work being undertaken by social workers in a wide range of capacities and settings but all utilising broad based social work knowledge, skills and values.

Congratulations to the award winners for setting such a high standard and thanks to you and your nominators for agreeing to share your work and achievements with us! This is indeed a challenge for the 1999 awards!

**VIRGINIA SCOTT**  
**VICE PRESIDENT ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL**  
**PRACTICE**

## MARGARET STOCKBRIDGE AWARD

The award is conferred on a graduate of the School of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of Western Australia.

Margaret Stockbridge, 'Teddie', was born in the United Kingdom and studied social work there, gaining a certificate in psychiatric social work. After holding a variety of social work positions from 1948 to 1958, Teddie migrated to Perth in 1958 and commenced work at the Child Guidance Clinic.

Teddie was the driving force in establishing the WA Branch of the AASW, holding several positions including that of Branch president from 1963 to 1965.

In 1965 Teddie commenced lecturing in the new social work course at the University of Western Australia. She acted as Departmental Head after the death of the founding Head Dr Walter Tauss. While lecturing, Teddie completed doctoral studies analysing female delinquency in Western Australia. She died in 1976.

A personal perspective was provided by Brian Wooller, who studied under Teddie Stockbridge. In an interesting connection to the Barbara Kinna Award, Brian noted that he completed his first fieldwork placement under Barbara Kinna's supervision.

Teddie carried the major teaching load during the formative years of the Social Work School, when she and Walter Tauss were the sole lecturers. She was extremely well read in all areas of social work. Teddie was very single-minded and had total dedication to the profession.

She had highly developed critical faculties and made heavy demands on her students, expecting total commitment towards the profession they sought to enter.

**Photo 7**  
**Frances Britton**

**Frances Britton**

1998 recipient of the Margaret Stockbridge Award

**BARBARA KINNA AWARD**

This award is made to a graduate from the School of Social Work at Curtin University.

Barbara Kinna was born in 1919, growing up in Singapore and France. During the closing years of World War II she was evacuated to Australia from Singapore. Barbara graduated in social work from Sydney University, spending some years working in the inner city suburb of Redfern, then in London and Singapore. From 1954 to 1964 she was the Chief Social Worker with Singapore Children's Society.

In 1964 Barbara returned to Australia and worked for the former Child Welfare Department, now Family and Children's Services. She was the first professionally qualified social worker to be appointed to the Department. In 1972 Barbara worked for the former Catholic Welfare Bureau, now Centrecare.

Barbara's life and work were characterised by her vitality, deep compassion for those in need and commitment to social work education.

Jan Roberts, who works at Shenton Park Rehabilitation Hospital, provided a more personal perspective on Barbara Kinna. From 1964 to 1996, Jan worked under Barbara's supervision at the Victoria Park branch of the Child Welfare Department.

Jan described Barbara as someone who took risks, was creative and challenged boundaries. Barbara was heavily involved in community development and used community resources to the advantage of her clients.

Barbara had very wide social work contacts and encouraged many people to enter the social work profession. Social work was the fabric of her being and she had a deep commitment to social justice.

**Photo 8**  
**Karen Grove**

**Karen Grove**

1998 recipient of the Barbara Kinna Award

The WA Branch congratulates Frances and Karen on their excellent achievements and wishes them both every success in their future work. At the award event, each was presented with a certificate and a cheque.

**LYNN SELEPAK, VICE PRESIDENT EDUCATION**

*Continued from page 4*

were struggling to make ends meet. This precipitated the confrontation at the Eureka Stockade. We need to be able to distinguish between what is fair and appropriate within a democratic context and what is confrontational, inappropriate and unjust.

The contradictory nature of criticising workers for inefficiency and excessive return for the efforts of their labour on the one hand, while supporting and praising the manipulative efforts of company directors in their search for greater returns to share holders, is difficult to understand. Government is there to ensure good government for all and fairness and equity for every citizen. It is not the job of government to support the excesses of any particular group within the community, particularly if those excesses take away from the common wealth.

It would be nice to see government demonstrate greater compassion for everyone and be less oriented towards the economics of corporate Australia which we are yet to see provide any real advantage or social improvement. Increasing corporate profit with deteriorating health services, lack of commitment to the elderly and unwillingness to invest in education, makes little sense.

Governments which are prepared to sell off the national estate and merely talk about a social dividend are not only acting dishonestly but are also deluding themselves. It is up to us all to attempt across our culturally diverse and functionally varied nation, to strive for reconciliation in its broadest sense. It is hoped all members will at least see fit to sign the enclosed page of our Sorry Book.

It was with considerable pride that I received an award for leadership at the Social Work Awards for Excellence evening on Tuesday 7 April. I would like to thank Barbara Meddin for her nomination and the Branch for this award. I feel particularly fortunate to have been Branch President over the last four and a half years during a time of considerable activity within the West Australian Branch.

The achievements of the Branch have been in no small measure due to the activities of successive committees of management and subcommittees. While I receive considerable pleasure in being presented with

this award, I am well aware that it is an award that represents achievements by a considerable number of people with whom I have been fortunate to be associated.

**BRIAN WOOLLER**

## Letter

*Virginia Scott  
Vice President Ethics and Professional Practice  
AASW (WA Branch)*

*Dear Virginia*

*On the 7 April 1998 I attended the Inaugural Social Work Awards for Excellence.*

*As an attendee and an award recipient I would like to commend those persons who were responsible for bringing that concept to fruition.*

*For me it was a truly "feel good" night. I am quite narrow at times in my practice and in work in a very specialised area I do not have the knowledge of the amazingly creative achievements other social workers are achieving.*

*The "night" allowed me to meet my peers and to hear what some other social workers are doing to feel how good it is to be a social worker.*

*The evening also confirmed how creative social workers are in their strategies to meet the changing systems where government appears to be reducing input in both acknowledging and their responsibilities to the Australian community.*

*Jan Roberts*

# New Members

Welcome to the following new members

Tania Atwell (Student Associate)  
Tracey Bampton (Student Associate)  
Fiona Cross (Student Associate)  
Hellen Hall (Student Associate)  
Gary Hurst (Student Associate)  
Alexis Jackson (Student Associate)  
Rebecca Jury (Student Associate)  
Peta Kierath (Student Associate)  
Kenneth Kilner (Student Associate)  
Susan Mercer (Student Associate)  
Susan Nottle (Student Associate)  
Leonie Plant (Student Associate)  
Teresa Righetti (Student Associate)  
Diane Rundin (Student Associate)  
Sara Terry (Student Associate)  
Amanda Thomas  
Trevor Thomas (ACTIV Foundation)  
Andrew Turnell (ASeTTS)  
Tracey Turner (Student Associate)

## Recent Graduates Subcommittee

Bad weather washed out the April meeting of the subcommittee. Apologies to Dave who as the only starter.

The subcommittee will meet again on Wednesday, 20 May 1998 at the Northbridge Hotel, 7.30 pm. Last month's agenda can be taken forward to the May meeting together with items arising from the recent Committee of Management meeting.

All recent graduates are welcome to attend. Those wishing to be members of the subcommittee must be members of the AASW. For further information contact Diane Smith on 9321 7033 (W) or 9295 4453 (H).

## COMMEMORATE NATIONAL SORRY DAY

### Background

In 1995 the Government launched an Inquiry into a tragic episode in Australian history - the practice of removing Aboriginal children from their families with the aim of assimilating them into Western culture. This practice went on throughout most of this century until the late 1960s.

To chair the inquiry, the Government chose a former High Court judge, Sir Ronald Wilson, a West Australian who flew Spitfires during World War II, and then pursued a legal career with distinction.

By the time the Inquiry reported, an election had brought in the new Government of John Howard. Their view was that Aboriginal interests had won too many concessions, thanks to an undue sense of guilt among white Australians, and they took steps to 'swing the pendulum back'. Then Sir Ronald's report, *Bringing them home*, landed on their desk. Its 680 pages told in heart-rending detail of the agony endured by Aborigines as a result of Government policy.

The policy was not just wrong, the report stated. It was 'genocidal'. This was not a judgment on the families and institutions in which the children had been placed - some were well cared for, though many were not. But the policy's aim was the disappearance of Aborigines as a distinct group; and this was genocide, as defined in the Convention on Genocide ratified by Australia in 1949. A national apology was called for, and measures for reparation.

Australians have grown up believing that Aborigines were altruistically taken out of wretched conditions, to be offered the immense benefits of white society. Now a National Inquiry was describing the practice in terms of a horrifying crime. For eight months the Government made no response except to say that there would be no national apology, and no compensation would be paid.

'Their silence was not echoed in the country. Bringing them home has sold far more than any comparable report. A shortened version has been produced, a total of 60,000 copies of the two versions are in circulation, and it is a frequent topic of media discussion. State parliaments and churches have held occasions to hear from representatives of their Aboriginal communities, and to ask forgiveness. Now the Government has announced that it will make available \$50 million over four years for counselling and family reunion services. Clearly it has been surprised by the response to the Inquiry's revelations.

'One of those most affected has been Sir Ronald himself. 'This Inquiry was like no other I have undertaken,' he said. 'Others were intellectual exercises, a matter of collating information and making recommendations. But for these people to reveal what had happened to them took immense courage and every emotional stimulus they could

muster. 'At each session, the tape would be turned on and we would wait... I would look into the face of the person who was to speak to us. I would see the muscles straining to hold back the tears. But tears would stream down, still no words being spoken. And then, hesitantly, words would come.

'We sat there as long as it took. We heard the story, told with that person's whole being, reliving experiences which had been buried deep, sometimes for decades. They weren't speaking with their minds, they were speaking with their hearts. And my heart had to open if I was to understand them.'

This was no easy challenge. 'I was Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Western Australia at the time we ran Sister Kate's home, where "stolen children" grew up,' he said. 'I was proud of the home, with its system of cottage families. Imagine my pain when I discovered, during this Inquiry, that children were sexually abused in those cottages.' He and the Presbyterian Church have since apologised to the Aboriginal people.

As a result Sir Ronald has become a crusader. At the age of 75 he is stumping the country, drawing crowds in their hundreds. 'Children were removed because the Aboriginal race was seen as an embarrassment to white Australia,' he told an audience in Canberra, the national capital. 'The aim was to strip the children of their Aboriginality, and accustom them to live in a white Australia. The tragedy was compounded when the children, as they grew up, encountered the racism which shaped the policy, and found themselves rejected by the very society for which they were being prepared.'

His aim is to rouse a people's movement which will implement the recommendations of the report, beginning with an apology. 'An apology begins the healing process,' he says. 'Apology means understanding, a willingness to enter into the suffering. It implies a commitment to do more.'

He envisages a national Sorry Day at which, in town halls and rural community centres, police stations and churches, all who want to express their sorrow can meet with their local Aboriginal communities, and ask forgiveness. 'Then we can go forward together,' he says. 'The inquiry changed a hard-boiled lawyer like me, and it can change our nation.'

From For a Change Magazine, London Jan. 1998

## National Sorry Day

A "Sorry Day" will be held on 26th May 1998, exactly a year after the tabling in Federal Parliament of the report of the National Inquiry into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

The report, *Bringing them home*, revealed the extent of forced removal, which went on for 150 years into the early 1970s; its consequences in terms of broken families, shattered physical and mental health, loss of language, culture and connection to traditional land, loss of parenting skills; and the enormous distress of many of its victims today.

This largely unknown history has stirred intense concern. *Bringing them home* has sold more copies than any comparable report. The Government, in its response, has acknowledged the

harm caused by the policy and has made proposals to address some of the recommendations.

The report recommended that a Sorry Day be held - a day when all Australians can express their sorrow for the whole tragic episode, and celebrate the beginning of a new understanding. Many of the 'stolen generations' told the Inquiry that they would value this. Unlike the widespread Aboriginal use of the term 'sorry business' to denote death, they see a Sorry Day as a means of restoring hope to people in despair.

The National Stolen Generation Working Group has therefore invited non-Indigenous people to join them in a national Sorry Day planning committee. They welcome the wider Australian community to remember and commemorate those affected by removal, so that the nation can continue the process of healing together. Indigenous people will participate in a Day dedicated to the memory of loved ones who never came home, or who are still finding their way home.

Many non-Indigenous Australians, having learnt the history of forced removal, wish to apologise for the practice; and State Parliaments, churches and organisations have done so in recent months. This has been greatly appreciated; because apology means understanding, a willingness to enter into the suffering, a commitment to help overcome its debilitating effects.

Sorry Day will be an important step on the road which all Australians are 'walking together'. It can help restore the dignity stripped from those affected by removal; and it offers those who carried out the policy - and their successors - a chance to move beyond denial and guilt. It could shape a far more creative partnership between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, with immense benefit to both.

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The WA Branch appreciates the support for the Annual State Conference

# Sorry Day

The Branch Committee of Management invites you to attend an early evening function to acknowledge Sorry Day and National Social Work Day

**Tuesday 26 May 1998 from 5.30 – 7.30 pm**

**4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, Lotteries House, 79 Stirling Street, Perth**

To acknowledge Sorry Day (26 May 1998) and National Social Work Day (20 May 1998), the Committee of Management has decided to hold an early evening function on Tuesday 26 May. Come along and share some time with other social work colleagues.

During the evening, several Aboriginal social workers will each talk for 5 to 10 minutes on their experiences and thoughts as Aboriginal social workers and about their work. A video Bringing them home about the stolen generation and the reconciliation process will also be shown.

Light refreshments will be served. Please RSVP, during business hours, to Liz Retamal by Friday 22 May on 9443 2934 or by Fax 9444 5410 for catering purposes.

## NATIONAL SOCIAL WORK DAY

**WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 1998**

What can you do to celebrate the interests and achievements of social work in your workplace?

- Stage a display.
- Organise a seminar or workshop for other workers.
- Host a special morning tea or lunch.
- Arrange an article and/or photographs for your local paper.
- Send a story about how you celebrated Social Work Day to be included in the next newsletter.
- Be creative!

**Most of all enjoy yourself on National Social Work Day**