

President's Report

This President's Report confines itself to the Board of Directors meeting held 19 – 21 June in Canberra.

Of great importance was the presentation to the meeting of the draft Memorandum and Articles. Considerable work has been done to bring the Memorandum and Articles up to date in the context of the Association's activities and strategic plan for the future, along with changes to the company law underpinning the Articles of Association. Since the first set of Articles were developed in relation to the company law extent in the ACT there have been a number of changes. There has been agreement between the States to develop uniform company legislation and there is a currently a review of that legislation occurring. Bearing in mind these changes and the need for the Association to examine its structure and direction, the review of the Memorandum and Articles is of great importance. These Articles will be put to the membership later this year.

A number of important changes are being proposed, among them the separation of the position of president from that of director. This will need careful drafting so as to not create problems vis a vis the agency responsibility that committees of management have in each of the separate states and territories jurisdictions. As it now stands, the responsibility for the company rests with the directors and any authority or power at a committee of management, itself or through its president can exert, is what is delegated to it by the Board of Directors. Separating the two would need to be carefully undertaken so as to not destroy the autonomy of branch activity and only rely on the time to time decisions of the Board about delegated authority.

The issue of mandatory CPE was not discussed at the Board meeting and sensibly left for discussion following more information in relation to both the current trial of CPE and log books, along with feedback received from members about the Quality Practice Options.

The budget took up considerable discussion on the Sunday. The Association's budget is now a substantial proportion and an increasing number of staff have been allowed for. This includes the release of money for the employment of project officers to work with the development of the Code of Ethics, social policy

and research matters, and casemix.

It is worth noting that over 50 % of the budget is taken up with members activities, half of which is the capitation return to branches. Although this budget allows for the employment of a research officer to help in the area of social policy and research, it is still a very small part of the overall budget.

The national office is about to undergo some refurbishment to accommodate increased number of staff employed at national office. We now have a Chief Executive Officer, Personal Assistant, a Membership Officer, a Publications Officer and a part time Accounting Officer. To be added to this will be the person coming to the Association from the devolution of the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR), a senior clerical officer to undertake reception and other duties and a project officer. The NOOSR devolvement allows for the Association to undertake a task previously belonging to the Commonwealth Government. It is anticipated that this will in the fullness of time be self funding but will need to be closely monitored to ensure that the Association's membership does not financially underwrite the assessment of qualifications for people inquiring about migration to Australia. It is interesting to note that the assessment of overseas qualifications has now gone a full circle, as it was something the Association did, was then taken over by the Commonwealth Government and now returned to the Association.

The assessment of Schools for eligibility is also a matter of some importance discussed at the meeting. Owing to the need to recruit and brief panel members, a new timetable for the assessment of Schools has been developed. To allow for the smooth transition there has been for most Schools an extension of the eligibility for membership of their graduates by approximately 12 months. It would take this long to ensure the development of a satisfactory panel both in terms of acceptability and competence.

While earlier I mentioned that a decision has not been made about mandatory CPE, the CPE program will continue. The completion of the required points by members will accord them the right to the title Accredited Social Worker. This title is reserved for those who have complied with the CPE requirements in existence in any one year. All members will receive a certifi-

cate, but only those who have completed the CPE requirements will be given accredited status.

Helen Murray, National Vice President, who is on leave of absence in Canada, will not be returning to Australia but will complete her term of office. Imelda Dodds has been filling in for Helen.

During the Branch feedback session at the meeting, it was interesting to note a number of Branches had undertaken a Sorry Day activity. It was also of interest to note that the NSW social workers have been accepted as counsellors under the NSW legislation for working with victims of crime. This is something that we will have to look at in Western Australia to ensure that similar conditions apply.

There has been a reworking of the portfolio responsibilities, particularly to accommodate the Registration Working Party, into a more cohesive structure. The Association is still pursuing the registration of title across the various jurisdictions in Australia.

The Association's membership has grown dramatically over the last twelve months and it is anticipated continuation in growth membership could top the six and a half thousand next year. The Association is now significant in size.

The Association has agreed to its strategic plan to increase its effort in the area of social policy and research. As mentioned earlier, it is serviced by only a small proportion of our budget. We need to harness our collective energy and examine ways that we can be more effective to our clients and more effective in influencing policy direction in both government and the large bureaucracies. This issue has always been difficult at the national level because of the size of Australia and the need to have enough paid staff to ensure that things get done. The use of funds to employ a project officer will certainly assist in this. Significantly, the Association has tended to do better when it has employed its own staff rather than going through a process of "outsourcing".

The meeting was characterised by a fairly unified approach to the Association's priorities which stands at increasing our involvement in social policy, research, CPE, assessment of courses, the establishment of standards and the continued development of the Code of Ethics and its application.

A draft Code of Ethics was presented to the meeting for its information but was not debated. As I have said on a number of occasions, an alteration to, and updating of the Code is overdue, as is a need to create simpler by laws and make the accessing of the Code of Ethics simpler to our clientele. As a self regulating profession, it is incumbent on us to ensure that the profession is accountable both to employers and clients. It is worth noting that there has only been two members expelled as a result of unethical behaviour.

There was a view expressed at the Directors meeting that we need to be more proactive in alerting both the community and employers about members who infringe the Code of Ethics. We have a duty of care in this regard and to not do so would be negligent. The balance however is between the community of

interest and the community at large and our obligation of course can only be to the community of interest as it would be improper to make it known beyond that, matters pertinent to behaviour in relation to the Association's ethics.

In closing it is worth noting that the Association is at this stage in a healthy position with regards to its membership and although it has budgeted for essentially break even financial situation, with a bit of luck it will do slightly better. The Association is moving towards an accrual reporting system where the budgeting and accounting will be done on a year by year basis when the services that are provided occur rather than when the bill is actually paid. This will take considerable adjustment both for the Board's thinking and to ensure that errors are not made that relate to cash flow.

Accrual accounting is the usual accepted method but it can be elusive if income and expenditure and balance sheets are not carefully scrutinised. Prepayments will be brought to account in the year in which the service occurs, rather than when the payment is actually made. No matter what system of accounting we use, it is what is in the bank and the flow of cash that is critical. The Association has an unbalanced cash flow as one may guess, because membership falls due at the beginning of the financial year and only a modest number of members are on a periodic payment of fees.

The meeting overall demonstrated to me that there is at least a degree of maturity and an attempt to commit to a planned approach.

BRIAN WOOLLER

Ad
Family & Childrens' Services

Gary Bowler Recognised

Gary Bowler, Executive Director Country Services of Family and Children's Services has been awarded the prestigious Public Service Medal for his contribution to the public service by the Governor General of Australia.

Gary has had a long, varied and distinguished career in the Western Australian public service and in the field of social work. Gary began his career with the public service in 1957 with the Child Welfare Department where he worked in administrative and support positions.

Photo

In 1971 Gary attended university and graduated with a social work degree in 1975. He then worked in the department (then known as the Department for Community Welfare) as a social worker and a social work supervisor.

Gary has also occupied positions in the department as Chief of Welfare Services and Director of the Northern Metropolitan Region and has been a member of the corporate executive for a number of years. He was also the inaugural Director of Counselling and Welfare Services in the Family Court of WA from 1976 to 1981.

Gary has been dedicated to the social work profession and social work practice. He has been particularly committed to social work placements. Descriptions of Gary by his colleagues have a common theme: his professionalism, dedication and "strong, positive and enthusiastic leadership." Also an enthusiastic ambassador for Family and Children's Services, Gary has been called on to speak on its behalf on many occasions.

Gary's commitment to providing high quality services has most recently been highlighted through his involvement in the new directions in child protection and family support initiatives. Gary was a major player in this review of child protection services. Family and Children's Services was awarded the Prime Minister's Award in 1997 for its work in this area.

Apart from receiving the Public Service Medal, Gary considers being awarded the Churchill Fellowship in 1979 a highlight of his career. The Fellowship allowed him to travel overseas and further his knowledge.

Gary pays tribute to the support of his family throughout his career. "I have always had very important support from my family - my wife Diane and now adult children Steve and Karen," he said.

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Notice

Good Shepherd Sisters

The Good Shepherd Sisters have established response teams in most Australian States to handle any complaints and queries from persons previously in their care. The Response Process is basically a listening exercise, which gives a former resident the opportunity to tell her story. An independent professional person facilitates the meeting and ensures that concerns are fully expressed. The Sisters may pay certain counselling costs where persons have unresolved issues related to their experiences in institutional care. In WA the sisters conducted the "Home of the Good Shepherd" at Leederville.

Former residents who wish to take advantage of the Response Process should phone (08) 9381.3955. For more information about the process inquiries should be directed to Sr Monica Walsh on Ph (07) 3818 3922 or Fax (07) 3818 3923.

A Hypothetical on Professional Ethics and Confidentiality: The Video

This is a 1 hour 15 minute recording of a live presentation organised by the WA Branch of the AASW and the Standing Conference of Senior Public Sector Social Workers in 1997. This presentation is a light-hearted discussion between members of a panel representing various agencies, with the encouragement of Moderator Richard Utting. It raises issues for social work practice including:

- Agencies' different policy and guidelines for response to alleged harm and risk
- Identifying who an agency's client is – who is the primary client?
- Duty of care
- The extent of confidentiality when there are risks to client safety
- Inter-agency interventions with family systems
- Referral procedures between agencies
- Relevance of agency supervisory structures where there are ethical dilemmas for the worker
- Consultation with the professional advisory body (e.g. AASW) about practice and ethical dilemmas.

New Members

Mary Allen (Student Associate)
Lisa Duckworth (Student Associate)
Bernard Fisher (Family & Children's Services)
Allison Frires (Defence Community Organisation)
Veronica Hughes (Student Associate)
Ashley Hunt (Student Associate)
Myles Jordan
Joukje Mulder
Lillian Passmore (Family & Children's Services)
Caroline Reberger (Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital)
Amanda Sinclair (Student Associate)
Virginia Ting (Student Associate)
Myrean Traupmann (Student Associate)
Marilyn Willoughby (Student Associate)
Stephanie Wilson (Adoptions International WA)

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The video is based on a scenario which involves a 10 year old student presenting at school with bruises. The boundaries of the different professions and agencies become evident as a number of agencies are consulted.

At the end of the hypothetical, three practitioners discuss the dilemmas for social work practice in more serious mode and clarify child protection procedures and the application of confidentiality where personal client risk is involved.

This video would be suitable for Schools of Social Work, agency supervision, and of general interest as a medium to review awareness of social work ethics and interagency referral and intervention strategies.

The video costs \$35 or can be loaned for \$5 plus postage and handling fee. Contact: AASW (WA Branch) Tel (08) 9220 0670, Fax (08) 9444 5410, Email aaswwa@aasw.asn.au. Website <http://www.aasw.asn.au>.

Quality Practice Options

Questionnaire responses

It's not too late!!

But Hurry!!

We would appreciate your comments on this important strategy for the future of AASW members. If you have misplaced your Options document please call National Office Freecall 1800 630 124 for another copy.

Your Branch representative is Mary Joyce
Tel: (08) 9346 4666 email: Mary.Joyce@health.wa.gov.au

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The WA Branch appreciates the support for the
Annual State Conference