

COFFEE SHOPS, RURAL COMMUNITY WORK AND THE HEART OF THE MATTER: A HEAD, HEART, HAND STORY

by Leonie Plant and Dyann Ross

"... Alone no one can dream the dark into love. We need each other for that. We need all the power we can raise together ..."
(Starhawk, 1990)

We meet, talk and drink coffee in Henrys, a crowded coffee shop. The student struggles to articulate inner turmoil, the lecturer listens, seeing familiar patterns and feelings in self. Very soon the roles and academic language fall away as the heart of the matter, for us both, takes form.

The dialogues become the space where an exploration of what a commitment to rural community work means for us. Borne of personal lived, here and now experiences, shared intellectual spaces on a regional university campus and with the discovery of a shared belief in the link between belonging, spirituality and liberation, we began to name the othered dimensions of social work practice (Sermabekian, 1994).

At the beginning of my social work placement in a grassroots community agency, I was feeling a level of anxiety that caused quite a degree of discomfort and unease. I couldn't understand where the anxiety was sourced and why I had such a strong sense of resistance to my placement. (The resistance was private and carried in my head I was reluctant to put it on the public domain without first having some kind of understanding around what was going on).

Then I began to read Kelly & Sewell and discovered what I thought was the answer "Community building has to include a sense of belonging that is an awareness of being grounded in space, place and base" (1988, p.51). I began to see that I had never had a sense of belonging I had never felt "connected" to any place or person apart from my children. I had always felt like an outsider and yet as I began to explore this dilemma it didn't seem to make any sense somehow.

I had spent the first sixteen years of my life in one house in one small close knit community. Then I travelled for five years before settling in an even smaller community where I lived in the same house for the next twenty years. This meant that the vast majority of my life had been spent in two very close knit communities participating in sports, schools and other community activities which one would imagine should/would produce a very real sense of communal belonging.

I could see the value of community for others but not for me. I began to see and feel the reality of a disconnection for/in me, and my apparent inability to feel a part of space, place and base. That I had always felt like an observer a disinterested insecure player. I recognised that generally

I worked on the assumption that my presence was tolerated, that I wasn't really welcome and this resulted in a mistrust of place and base they weren't really safe for me.

As a social worker in various rural communities over many years, I too have been at times painfully aware of not belonging to the community, of observing from some fragmented space the clients I worked with and of feeling incongruence between my values and visions and own lived experience.

I visited another smaller rural town where I attended a meeting of various workers from a broad range of services within the community. There was much talk about fundraising events that had been held during the year Saturday morning sausage sizzles outside the local supermarket being the main topic of conversation. It was obvious that fundraising was a community effort with each worker relying on the other worker's support to raise funds for their particular project.

After the meeting, we had lunch with two of the local workers. During our conversation they pointed out that a social worker who worked in the town didn't actually live there but travelled back to Perth each weekend. They pointed out that the social work position that this person held was pivotal in the community and yet the commitment to the community was perceived to be lacking because of absence from community activities (like the sausage sizzles).

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It has been a long journey to find where I belong ~ to find my personally tailored community of like souls. At different points along the way, I have had an abiding sense of communion with at least a few people. Significantly, the connections of heart that I regard as central to community have most consistently derived from relationships with the people I work with ~ clients, students, other lecturers and co-workers. These relationships have tended to involve “peoples of the periphery”(Waldegrave & Tamasese, 1993) – both people from non-urban geographical places and people on the periphery edge of mainstream ideas, life-styles, cultures.

Jobs in rural community work tend to be seen as an integral part and resource of the whole community which requires a commitment from the worker where what you do is more than a paid nine to five job. The rural social worker often not only “knows” his/her clients but the clients ‘know’ him/her. The rural social worker is perhaps uniquely able to know the context in which the clients exist – the physical and the social context – their children go to the same schools, they do their shopping in the same shops, etc.

As a general pattern, the urban social worker is able to move almost anonymously from home to work place and back again. He/she is able to cross physical and social boundaries, to move easily from one space to another apparently without any expectations from clients or co-workers that he/she should do otherwise. Thus keeping great chunks of self tucked neatly away in another world separated and distanced from the world of the client.

The closely held estrangement for me as a lecturer in a rural social work program in a regional town has been the lack of (dialogical) spaces and places to name and cultivate an integrity between my head, heart and hand. The thread of connection to other than the academically sanitised knowledge and relationships lies immersed and still largely uncommunicated in my postgraduate study – *self + dialogical context + synchronicity = mutual empowerment.*

Yet, I am discovering the spaces and places for communion (or mutual empowerment) at the same time as I stay longer in this community and job, as I reach out more than before to neighbours, as I entwine my work and friendship relationships ...

Over the next few days, my thoughts kept going back to this worker who commuted between home community and work community. I kept thinking about how he only seemed to be bringing certain bits of himself to this community to his work. That there was a part of him that was never entirely present/available, but always sort of there, an attachment so to speak. It was as if the physical separation of his home/family from his work community had some sort of significant meaning for me.

I began to feel as if there was a separation of me from me, of a part of self from self. Just as the worker journeyed from place to place so I felt as though I was journeying from self to self and back again. There was a part of me that I would visit and then leave secreted away in a private place my spiritual self was hidden, not given or offered as part of the gift of me.

Perhaps to name one’s own and the other person’s experiences as spiritual is a daring, if not foolish, undertaking when the pressure to centralise, standardise, and homogenise is so strong:

“Naming is indeed an act of courage, a political act, a costly act, an act of inscribing belonging, drawing on sacredness. Naming is a powerful act of defining. Naming, if it gives life, is an act of liberation”.
(Waldegrave & Tamasese, 1993, p.1).

As the urban social worker is able to cross boundaries maintaining a separateness so we have been sustaining fractured selves compartmentalised and neatly packaged. This is not about being overtly “spiritual” but it is about allowing that part of self to be integrated with the other parts of self to be able to live a spiritual life and bring that with us to our practice. To be able to unashamedly offer love as an integral part of our work now there’s a scary concept which can easily be misconstrued to mean something other than what we are talking about.

We each have a spiritual self which desires to be nurtured and given space to be balanced, we need to allow that part of us to be infused through the other parts of us and to bring that to practice to life.

Maria Harries (1996, p.3) states *“I confront the core of the tension between social work as a profession and spirituality as an experience – the tension between personal values and objective behaviours and beliefs. It seems to me that one of the ways that we have dealt with this has been to secularise social work and to some extent community service to remove the spiritual and the personal”.*

We are “people of the periphery” and one of the positives of living in a rural community is knowing that under the cover of being peripheral to mainstream values and concerns, is the intellectual, emotional and spiritual space/room to move and relate differently. At the very least in our rural community work and relationships we can resist being defined by the “centre culture along its meaning system” (Waldegrave & Tamasese 1993, p.8) and we can begin to:

*“name our discipline
name its shortcomings
name its strengths
name its drawing of people into belonging.”*

As Friere (1993, p.14) claims, to name one’s world is to know it and this is a key part of becoming: *“A subject who acts upon and transforms his/her world, and in so doing moves toward ever new possibilities of fuller and fuller life individually and collectively.”*

The stories of import to us then are those about personal journeys that cultivate “the power-from within .. and using them to transform ourselves, our community, our culture, using them to resist the destruction that those who wield power-over are bringing upon the world” (Starhawk, 1990). It is also very much about the “power-of-the-between”.

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REFLECTIONS

BY GAYLE SINGER-EDWARDS

For thousands of years we'd kept our law
unchanged by time or purpose
We'd survived without minerals or wealth
the land's riches upon the surface

We shared our food with the elderly and young
We nurtured the earth we lived on
Our connection to land was spiritual
passed down through dance and song

In the 1700's the strangers arrived
George III's instructions in hand
"Terra nullius", they claimed as we watched on
"In the name of our King, British land."

They called us 'natives', a primitive kind
without a purpose, they wrote
Little did they know, or little did they care
our law couldn't travel by boat

British 'subjects' they deemed us,
but our colour they could not accept
a White Australia they strove for
Our race was dying, they said.

In the 1800's, the war still raged
We resisted the British invasion
To protect our law was our only aim
we were at odds in that equation

Our warriors weren't put before their court
as 'British subjects' should have been
Possies, guns, unfettered patrols
made 'examples' of us to be seen

"Keep the blacks together," they said,
"and 'smooth the dying pillow',
We'll take control of the way they live
although the process may be slow".

Our men were used for labour,
our women to warm their beds,
The seeds they sowed were visible
half white, half black were bred.

Our mothers loved their children all,
their hue, of no concern
They gave us our 'alleged' father's name
Yet 'no claim' could be made in turn

"It's 'a disgrace'", they said for us to allow
those coloured kids their rights
to live amongst their loved ones,
and learn the native life.

In the 1900's they discussed the problem
of the coloured kinds they 'sired'
"From their mother's breast we'll take them
they'll forget them in twenty four hours."

So separation occurred once more,
they cajoled, they stole, they lied
They colour coded even siblings
we fought, we grieved, we cried.

Depending on our colour
to institutions we went
To learn the ways of the white man
No letters home were sent

"Your letters to your children
are upsetting to say the least
If you love your children and wish them the best
These letters you must cease."

We wondered why our Mothers
didn't come to take us home
Little did we know then, that
contact with 'Natives' was not to be condoned.

We learnt to speak their language
and count from one to ten
to enable use to work for them
for about two pounds, back then.

We knew not of a mother's love
or of children how to rear
Labourers and domestics
they saw as our careers

Outside the institution's gates
we stepped with hope and pride
They said that we could take our place
as citizens with rights.

But as we ventured into the world,
a loneliness set in
We had no home, no family place
and they judged us by our skin.

Confusion, fear and hopelessness
for some of us, took hold
There was no one to turn to now
to protect us from the cold.

For those of us who could stand no more
the pain of being spurned
Release in death seemed the only way
to the Dreamtime we returned

And still today they claim its best
we changed our way of life
"You're better off than you've ever been."
Who's values, we ask and at what price?

Today they question what to do
about the land's demise
Environmentalists are called for
To us, its no surprise

We treated the land in all its beauty
with the respect that it deserved
Today it's mined and stripped of trees
little left is been conserved

Mabo and the Wik decision
changed the status quo
But the relevant State governments
continue to say "No".

They spend big money on appealing
the decisions that were made
and blame the Aboriginal community
for the appeal costs to be paid.

The media too, have much to answer
in its sensationalised forays
There is no objectivity
in our lives that they portray

If as much attention was given
to our history and our plight
You, the youth would understand
Our decision to stand and fight

We are the people in the park
We're athletes, actors and authors
We're Commissioners, doctors and elders too,
We're mothers, sons and daughters

The destructive waves of ignorance
for generations has survived
But knowledge will be the key that turns
a reversal of the tide.

Gayle presented this wonderful poem in her address at the State Conference which touched the audience who attended the panel "Bridging differences through social work", of which she was a member.

NB: Further details about Gayle's contribution are available in the proceedings of the 1998 State Conference on the Branch Home Page [<http://westausasw.highway1.com.au/StateConference/proc98.pdf>]

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World Vision head sees hope for children

by Lloyd Roberts

Working with local religious organisations to better the future of children, and making the public more aware of the work his group does are goals Tim Shao, World Vision of Taiwan's new executive director has for the coming year.

The 56-year-old Taiwan-Australian's decision to head the local branch of the international Christian service organisation comes after 25 years of service work in the US and Australia. Shao is taking an extensive background in church and social activities and hopes to inject it here in his homeland with plans to raise his group's already impressive child sponsorship statistics.

According to Shao, 11,961 local children are receiving food and care through World Vision Taiwan's child sponsorship program, and 70 percent of the children being helped are aborigines. Over 10,000 people in Taiwan are sponsoring local children through World Vision, with as the statistics show, many sponsoring more than one child. For children in 33 other countries, Shao says over 19,000 are receiving aid through his group's program, sponsored by over 16,000 people here.

But Shao who came here March 2 for familiarisation and officially took the post May 2 to succeed Jerry Chang, these statistics are not enough. "When we talk about 11,961 children in

Taiwan, proportionally speaking it's relatively a small number of children being sponsored. We actually want to increase by 5,000 sponsorship to our sponsorship of overseas children," he said in a recent interview at his World Vision Taiwan office.

His philosophy began with working with the disabled in addition to health service and relief and development projects. He later received a Master's degree in social work from the University of North Carolina and did post graduate studies and training in political and administration development, child protection services and protective services for the elderly.

Helping to coordinate the resettlement of more than 50,000 Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong with the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees helped cement his expertise as a world class social worker. He further employed his Christian beliefs by serving as the national director for the Australian Council of Churches and other church organisations in that country. One of the biggest groups World Vision Taiwan has targeted in its 34 years on the island is the local aborigine population and six centers have been set up to help them.

"Aborigines are moving more and more into urban areas. When they move into urban areas they find themselves out of appropriate housing, out of jobs, and in the case of young girls, many move into prostitution," Shao said. The centres provide job training as well as counselling for alcoholism and abuse problems. World Vision also runs 38 child sponsorship centres all over Taiwan, including in remote mountain areas and offshore islands. "The domestic ministry is quite wide in variety and covers half of our budget, but I don't believe people in Taiwan are aware we have so much concentrated in the domestic ministry," he said.

Originally published in The China Post, May 1998

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- Communication and networking skills?
- Team leadership abilities?

The AASW (WA Branch) is seeking expressions of interest from members for the position of Convenor of its annual State Conference. The Convenor chairs a small committee and is responsible for consultation with the major players in the industry. The tasks include identifying the current concerns of the industry and the profession, and developing a theme for the Conference around these concerns. The committee issues a Call for Papers, arranges for these to be refereed, invites a Keynote Speaker, and develops the Conference programme and activities.

The Convenor and committee are supported in the task by a Project Officer who is employed by the Branch to undertake all the practical arrangements for the Conference. The Convenor reports to the Branch Committee of Management, and is responsible for managing a budget of around \$40,000. For further information, please call Daphne Cross (1997-1998 Convenor) on 08 9222 2816.

BEST PRACTICE FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Queensland Department of Families, Youth and Community Care is undertaking a national project to develop best practice documents and tools for working with children and young people affected by domestic violence. This project, titled 'Kids & DV', is funded under the National Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Funding Initiative.

Leslie Gevers Community Management Services, a Perth based consultancy group, has been contracted to implement the project over a twelve month period from July 1998. This is an important project for all services working with children and young people affected by domestic violence as it will provide much needed resources to support services in their work. These will include:

- an internet Home Page for information about the project and for exchanging information with other service providers;
- an online bibliography of articles, books and web sites;
- proposed minimum and best practice standards for service providers;
- a booklet describing up to 20 examples of best practice in services working with children and young people affected by domestic violence;
- tools for evaluating the effectiveness of programs and services;
- identification of the training needs of workers, training resources and broad training strategies for this specialist area;
- a model for an ongoing network of services working in this important area.

Leslie Gevers Community Management Services is inviting services in all States and Territories that assist children and young people affected by domestic violence to provide details of their work for inclusion in the database. They are also seeking nominations for best practice examples of services working with the target group. If you would like more information about this project or would like to include your service in the database, contact Leslie or Sue on (08) 9336 7717. You can visit the internet site for this project at www.lgcms.com.au/kids&dv

Letters

**The Editor
The West Australian**

Dear Editor

Mr Falconer your incredibly simplistic approach to the solution of crime is very disappointing. I would recommend strongly that you read with great care the publication *Seen and heard: priority for children in the legal process* by the Australian Law Reform Commission and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. I draw your attention to page 422 of that publication where comment is made in relation to system abuse, "*Children are traumatised not only by violence, neglect or physical or emotional abuse. Their trauma can also be perpetuated or exacerbated by insensitive, neglectful or exploitative practice within government and non government agencies set up to assist and protect children.*" It would be interesting to see how you might propose to deal with the consequences of systems abuse.

The removal of children from their families is one of the most traumatising experiences that children can face. History has shown, with the Stolen Generation and the post World War II Scheme for the Migration of British children to Australia, that misbegotten social policy causes greater problems than it sets out to solve. Your suggestion of removing the children of criminals is not only absurd, but is one of the most insensitive and horrific suggestions that could be made. Does your use of the word criminal include those who might be engaging in fraud and other white collar crime, as they may well be able to influence their offspring in devious and tricky means of tax evasion and scheme rorting?

It needs to be remembered that the current provisions of the law allows for a child to be deemed in need of care and protection when that child lives under conditions that indicate that they are lapsing, or likely to lapse into a career of vice or crime. This judgement becomes one in which both the authorities and the courts are involved and ensures, unlike I suspect your suggestion, that due process is followed.

Your suggestion is not one that fits a modern and civil society. It is one that is better suited to dark and oppressive times, a regime of totalitarian police control. Lets hope that that is not your greater dream.

Yours sincerely

Brian Wooller
25 August 1998

**The Editor
The West Australian**

Dear Sir

Portrayal of Social Workers

I have recently moved to Western Australia from Queensland. I have watched with despair since I arrived a strategy of representing social workers as "out of control", unaccountable, pariahs of social ills – feeding up on the social distress of society (West Australian, 22.8.98).

I am deeply concerned that such a portrayal of the role of social workers contributes little to the discussion around the complex social issues which need to be addressed within our society. Social workers, I would suggest, work within and try to respond appropriately to this complexity, they do not create it. Our society, because of the choices we make to be democratic, to ascribe rights to families and individuals to make choices, will hence have to live with the 'cost' of such choices as reflected by differences within and between families and individuals.

How we as a society respond to these differences will always be uncertain and certainly highly contested between groups. Challenges which produce more creative responses to how we understand and address complex social issues such as child abuse/neglect, drug abuse, family conflict, death and dying can only aid our thinking and response. Challenges which pillar one group, such as social workers Department of Family and Children's Services, can only lead to paralysed practice, tunnelled and restrictive in its response, guided more by what critics may say than any creative response need of the situation. We as a society cannot risk the paralysing of our thinking in the face of such complex social and personal needs.

As a practising social worker, as well as an academic, I remember frequently my thoughts when responding to a child abuse case prior to coming to Western Australia. I was standing in the garden with another social worker talking to a father who had a history of psychiatric illness. Two young children were reported by the neighbours to be in the house who were being neglected, ie dirty, not fed and possibly abused. The father was highly agitated as he had not been taking his medication. For two hours, we spoke to him as we calmed him down and gained access to the children – without violence or distress. I looked around the garden during the two hours and saw no one else there. Neighbours were watching through windows. However, no one else but the social workers were there to try and remain connected to this father to help him and his children.

Social workers are not perfect, because society is not perfect. We work hard to train new social workers to be aware of, and acknowledge, the complexity of their work, to reference their work to an informed knowledge base, and to take a professional position in relation to how practice should occur.

Without the support of the society, without the engagement of all groups within society in relation to how we as a society respond to complex social issues, these issues will become more and more

unsolvable. We have the choice whether we will work together to achieve better outcomes as a society, or marginalise and pillar one group, who will eventually find it hard to hold on to their value and ethical commitment. Challenging with support is productive. Pillaring serves no one's needs.

Yours sincerely

Dr Pauline Meemeduma
Associate Professor of Social Work
Edith Cowan University, Bunbury Campus
25 August 1998

Brian Wooller
Branch President

Dear Brian

Re: "Sorry Day"

The Indigenous Social Workers' Group would like to thank the Western Australian Branch for their formal recognition of the struggles of the Indigenous community. This was reflected in the presentation of a Social Work "Sorry Book" to your Indigenous social work colleagues, an inspiring gesture to your Indigenous colleagues and their community.

We appreciate your commitment to Indigenous struggles and hope that members of the Association will continue to work towards reconciliation.

Yours sincerely

Violet Bacon
for the Indigenous Social Workers' Group
8 September 1998

Brian Wooller
Branch President

Dear Brian

I am writing to thank you and the Committee of Management for the very thoughtful gift and your kind words at the recent Annual General Meeting.

It is with considerable sadness that I conclude my term as the Branch Vice President for Education and my five years' association with the Committee of Management.

I have very much enjoyed my involvement over the past few years and I anticipate maintaining a close connection with the Association and its activities. Thank you again and my very best wishes for the ongoing work of the Branch.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Selepak
9 September 1998

Net Watch

One of the really useful features of the Internet is that it opens the opportunity for much greater access to information about issues of current community concern. The enhanced capability for improved access can have a major impact on the process of consultation and decision making by government. However, for this benefit to be achieved it requires departments and statutory bodies to invest in sophisticated and responsive information systems.

A sense of the possibilities of what can be achieved when an organisation establishes a comprehensive online information can be appreciated by looking at an example. One of the best Australian Internet sites in this regard is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) home page [<http://www.abc.net.au/>]. If you start at the top of the ABC home page you quickly realise that the ABC has developed a site which comprehensively provides a vast amount of information (Figures 1 and 2). An excellent feature is that the ABC home page has been designed to meet the needs of very diverse interest groups.

For instance, there are areas like Homework and Behind the News (BTN) - see Figure 3. These areas of the web site are targeted at the needs of young people and other groups for easily understood and succinct information on popular science topics. One of the outstanding features of BTN is that it has a search engine (called the whirlpool) and contains one page downloadable pages, most of which contain a mixture of text and graphic. BTN news items are published weekly and skilfully mingle an analysis of major local and international current news with sports and other issues (for example, an environmental topic).

An area that may be of particular interest to social workers is the extensive collection of information about Radio National programs [<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/>]. See Figure 4.

It is worthwhile visiting this part of the ABC home page on a regular basis, especially to view and download the transcripts of the programs such as the Science Report, Ockhams's Razor, Health Report, the Law

Report and Background Briefing which address a large range of social and health issues [<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/translist.htm>].

These programs are an invaluable source of concise information and opinion about an astounding range of issues. The strength of the RN programs is that they often involve interviews with leaders in the area under discussion who are able and willing to debate and reflect on matters which just never rate a mention in the cacophony of shrill opinions and overbearing program hosts who dominate the bland diet offered on most of the commercial radio networks.

The Health Report is hosted by Dr Norman Swan who deals with a remarkable spectrum of health issues (Figure 5). A refreshing feature of these programs is that they contain a mixture of macro and micro issues. Thus on the big picture level the program will explore health policy issues (for instance, two recent programs on the operation of safe injecting rooms in Switzerland and approaches to dealing with heroin dependence). If you want to increase your understanding of social issues, the RN area in the ABC home page is highly recommended.

NB: Figures excluded to reduce file size.

Review of Code of Ethics Forum

Thursday 22 October 1998

To be held in the
Training Room, 139 Claremont Crescent, Swanbourne
7.00 for 7.30 to 9.30 pm

There will be light refreshments served between 7.00 and 7.30 pm. Members are invited to participate in this forum on the new draft Code of Ethics.

You will find a copy of the draft Code in your August edition of the National AASW Bulletin. Please read the Code and bring it – and your ideas – with you to the forum! Copies will also be available at the forum. The proposed time frame for the finalisation of the Code is quite short and the forum will be an important opportunity for you to consider such questions as:

- What is the overall structure of the Code?
- How does it explain what social work is about?
- What are the core social work values and principles in the Code?
- What kinds of behaviours should and does it address?
- Will it help me to address ethical issues?
- Will it be easy to find clear statements to guide me in ethical decision making?

Remember! This Code of Ethics will be the basis for your professional practice and conduct in the future and on which others will assess that practice and conduct. It is therefore essential that we get it right now!

RSVP for catering purposes to Liz Retamal by phone 9443 2934 during business hours or fax 9444 5410, by COB Monday, 19th October 1998.

Enquiries to: John de Jongh, Convenor, Branch Ethics Committee, Tel: 9559 1234 (W), Virginia Scott, Vice President (Ethics and Professional Practice), Tel: 9450 2833 (H).

New Members

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

- Nad Eltaiba
- Kathryn Gabrielson (Daughters of Charity)
- Lindy Gleeson (Warwick Clinic)
- Jennifer Hoffman (Royal Perth Hospital)
- Adreana Jones
- Sarah Kemp (Student Associate)
- Ann O'Neill (Student Associate)
- Yvonne Owens (Student Associate)
- Susan Scheer (Student Associate)
- Daniel Walsh (Disability Services Commission)

A STUDY OF THE MANAGEMENT OF DIFFERENCE AND CONFLICT IN SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE

Volunteer social worker participants required

As part of my Honours thesis in social work at Edith Cowan University, Bunbury Campus, I am undertaking a study of how social workers understand, experience and respond to difference and conflict within their work settings.

The literature clearly indicates difference and conflict are inherent to organisations. This difference and conflict can work to generate more creative practice settings or it can work to generate problems and divisiveness.

Very little of the social work research and practice literature has focussed on the experience of difference and conflict for social workers. My study is a beginning attempt to describe how social workers may experience, understand and respond to difference and conflict in practice.

Volunteers are sought to be part of the study. Participants are not required to identify themselves or their organisational setting. The study will be conducted through a semi-structured interview process. This can occur either through participants receiving a questionnaire by mail, filling it out and returning it; by phone; or in person with the researcher if geographical accessibility is possible. The questionnaire should take about one hour of your time.

Any issues or questions in relation to the study can be directed to:

**Dr Pauline Meemeduma,
Head of Social Work Program
Edith Cowan University, Bunbury
Tel: (08) 9780 7789**

For involvement in the study please contact:

**Ashley Hunt
(4th Year Social Work Honours student)
Tel: (08) 9795 5905
between 7.00 – 9.00 pm weeknights
from 5.10.98 to 5.11.98.**

THE 17TH ANNUAL BRANCH CONFERENCE

The Committee of Management thanks the Conference Planning Committee, its Convenor, Daphne Cross and its Project Officer, Marian Maughan for an extremely successful Conference.

I am sure all those members who attended found the Conference a re-affirming and enjoyable experience. The Conference is the Branch's major public endeavour and offers members an opportunity to network and take time out from their busy work schedule, to recharge their batteries and share in positive aspects of learning and development in social work.

The position of convenor, offers an excellent opportunity for a member to both develop their organisational and management skills, their public presentation skills and increase their professional profile.

The Committee of Management would like to call on members interested in nominating for the position of convenor to contact Brian Wooller. (See article earlier in the newsletter.)

STATE CONFERENCE

Members attending the Branch Dinner were much entertained by the quiz. The entries in a limerick competition revealed that the Association has some talented members amongst its ranks.

A sample of these entries follows. Strangely, the letter writing abilities of Brian Wooller (apparently) was a source of inspiration for some!

*There once was a man named Brian
Who thought he could roar like a lion
He gave it his best
And wrote to the "West"
You must give him credit for trying*

*There was once a man who wrote oft to the paper
I say, I say it's a plot, not a caper
Some may say my scribble has no purpose
Believe me, life is more than a circus
I shall remain your faithful commentator*

*There once was a worker who wished to confide
but with ethics and moral codes to abide
The Stars were consulted
the clairvoyant reflected
and the outcome was soon justified.*

SUPERVISION: TOWARDS PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND MASTERY

FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER 1998

TRAINER: ROBERT VAN KOESVELD

There are still places available! Don't miss this excellent professional development opportunity. Register now for this one day workshop!

Professional supervision is essential for the development and maintenance of a solid professional identity and for achieving proficiency or mastery as a social worker. This workshop will provide frameworks and skills development to enable you to be an effective supervisor. The workshop will address:

- Types of supervision
- Developmental frameworks
- The supervisory contract
- Roles of the supervisor
- The supervisory space
- Process issues in supervision.

For further details or to obtain a copy of the registration form contact: Liz Retamal Tel: (08) 9443 2934 (B/H) or Fax: (08) 9444 5410 or from the Branch website [<http://westausaasw.highway1.com.au/>].