

President's Report

I would like to place on the record my appreciation of the work done by Dr Barbara Meddin during her period as National Vice President. Her term of office ends at the Annual General Meeting of the Association on Friday the 20th November. Her untiring efforts as Vice President has led to the finalisation of an organised Continuing Professional Education (CPE) program for the Association. Thank you Barbara, a job well done.

I would like to congratulate Dr Pauline Meemeduma on her election to the position of National Vice President. Pauline commences her in term in November at the AGM. I look forward to working with Pauline on the Board of Directors and I am sure she will continue the long tradition of good work on behalf of the Association undertaken by members from Western Australia.

The Grace Vaughan Lecture will be held at the Octagon Theatre on the 16th November. The lecture, on this occasion, will be under the auspices of the Women's Policy Development Office and in conjunction with the AASW and the University of Western Australia will continue on an annual basis.

It is hoped that members will attend this lecture which this year is being given by the eminent economist from New Zealand, Marilyn Waring. This event has always promised to showcase a prominent woman who subscribes to the principles so firmly enunciated by the late Grace Vaughan particularly during her term of office as National President of the AASW and President of the IFSW.

As mentioned earlier the Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on Friday 20th November and you are urged to ensure that your proxy vote be given to someone who will be in attendance at that meeting. This can be any of the Directors or National Office Bearers or any other person who is a member who will be attending the AGM.

The Branch has also decided that it will provide a "Question and Answer" segment for members in the newsletter. Questions can be addressed to the Editor, President or Branch Committee and will be answered as promptly as possible.

If the question is one requiring an answer from the Committee of Management it will be dealt with at the first meeting following receipt of the question and may be published in the newsletter following that meeting. It is hoped that this will further enhance communication between members and the Branch Committee of Management and ensure that members remain informed about the Associations activities and directions.

BRIAN WOOLLER

BRANCH FORUM

Tuesday 10 November

5.15 to 6.00 pm

4th Floor Conference Room

79 Stirling Street, Perth

All members are invited to attend a forum to discuss the new AASW Draft Constitution. It is important that you have your say to ensure that the Constitution reflects the appropriate governance of your Association.

This Constitution will be brought to the Annual General Meeting of the Association on the 19th November. It is important that your views are represented. It is hoped that proxy voting forms will be available for you at this forum.

An online version of this newsletter can be found at
<http://westausaasw.highway1.com.au/Newsletters/newsletters.htm>

TRIAL OF NEW SYSTEM FOR ASSISTING CHILDREN IN CARE

A major innovation in developing a framework to assist children who are living out of home is being trialed in this State. Much of the credit for the development of this exciting approach to protecting the interests of State wards who live out of home goes to Mike Clare, a Senior Lecturer at the School of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of WA.

As members will know, the need for improved methods of identifying and managing children living out of home was triggered by the tragic death in 1973 of a six year girl, Maria Colwell. Subsequent UK research about the quality of life of young children in care identified the need for improved practices, assessment processes and ongoing monitoring procedures to ensure that children legally in the care of the state were in receipt of 'good enough corporate parenting'.

The possibility of adapting the British materials to meet West Australian needs encouraged Mike to pilot the use of these materials by Family and Children's Services and a number of non government organisations (NGOs). Mike has been with the UWA since 1987 and in 1993 became interested in adapting the principles of the UK approach to managing children living in care.

The early results were encouraging and now with the availability of funding from the Department of Family and Children's Services earlier this year, there will be a careful implementation of a West Australian version of the British system. The initial pilot involved six FCS District Offices (three in the metropolitan area and three in the country) and also included eight out of nine of the main NGOs working in this area.

It is to be noted that the assessment, planning and review materials are now widely used in the UK, with over 90 per cent of statutory agencies in that country adopting the system. Interest has spread well beyond the UK to other countries, such as Russia, Romania, a number of American states, Canada and most European countries. It is believed that trials are being implemented in New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria and are being considered in Tasmania.

The approach of the system, known as the Assessment and Action Record, can be best described as child focussed. Traditionally, agencies who are responsible for children living out of home have relied upon reports and information generated by adults, such as by a social worker, foster parents, health care workers, teachers etc. This method assumed that these adults were best able to identify and understand a child's needs.

The shortcomings of this approach are overcome by the Assessment and Action Record which requires that an adult needs to meet on a number of occasions with a young person who is living out of home. The Record specifically requires that a child's views and wishes are elicited through a series of open-ended questions. The responses to questions are used to generate plans that are customised to the particular circumstances and needs of each child.

The plan has the benefit of ensuring that at the departmental level, for instance through a case conference, of being able to establish a framework to monitor over time the achievement of identified targets and desired outcomes.

The system includes the use of distinct modules which are carefully designed to assess and plan the needs of young people across six age groups - less than 1 year of age, 1 - 2 years, 3 - 5 years, 6 - 9 years, 10 - 14 years, and older than 14 years.

The first phase of the project commenced in July this year, and will involve revising materials where necessary to take account of the different social, ethnic and cultural mix of the Western Australian community. The second phase will occur in early 1999, and will involve the training and support of staff of NGOs and the FCS, to work with the new system. The third phase which will most likely be in 2000, will involve an evaluation study.

The desired outcome of the system is to obtain better outcomes in the assessment and planning process of children being parented by the State. It is intended that it will be obligatory for all State Wards in out of home care to be managed through the Assessment and Action Record system of structured modules. The system can be made available to those children who are being looked after by relatives or in voluntary care.

A second exciting project, which has been funded by the ANZ Foundation, involves the development of a program of self help mentoring. This program is provided by the WA Association of Young People In Care, a body which has a membership of young people who are currently in care or have been in care.

Initially a pilot will be conducted for 12 young people likely to be from the 16 to 17 age group, who are in the process of moving into independent living situations. These young people will be assisted and supported by about 12 mentors, who themselves have been through a similar process.

A third project which has just been confirmed, involves a joint project with the Department of General Practice at the University of WA. The object of this project is to address the issue of fragmented health records of young people living out of home. As young people in these circumstances may on a number of occasions move to a new place of living, there is a likelihood that vital health information, records of treatment and details of health problems will be lost and not maintained in one complete set.

This project is set to be launched in 1999 and will be used to develop a health record that can be transferred from health care provider to health care provider, if the young person shifts to a new place of living.

Mike's commitment to developing a better system of protecting the needs of young people through the development of a local version of the Assessment and Action Record is to be applauded.

This research, hopefully, will bring about improvements in the well-being of young people and make sure that statutory obligations are fully met.


It will also have broader implications as the same components and similar content is used in a number of jurisdictions it may be possible in the future to undertake comparative cross-national and international research of processes to improve the standard of care of young people who need to be looked after by the State.

Readers interested in the various projects that have been established by Mike can contact him at the School of Social Work at the University of WA, or by email: mclare@cyllene.uwa.edu.au.


NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

- Briony Ashford (Student Associate)
- Bernadette Devine (Student Associate)
- Siobhan Foley (Perth City Mission)
- Vanda Francke (Kinway)
- Bronwyn Garnett (Student Associate)
- Bruce Maguire (Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital)



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Toll-free on: 1 800 146 164

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

The Committee of Management has decided that there will be a question and answer segment to *The West Australian Social Worker*.

If you have any questions about the Association and/or the WA Branch or about subcommittees please send your question to:

The Editor, Questions
The West Australian Social Worker
AASW
PO Box 198
West Perth WA 6872

Questions and answers may be published in a subsequent newsletter.

Branch CPE Events

RELATING TO MEN 2 DAY FORUM

Friday 27th and Saturday 28th November 1998
Mercure Hotel, 10 Irwin Street, Perth

The program provides participants with an exciting, varied, and comprehensive range of speakers and workshops.

The Forum will be opened by Federal Attorney-General Hon. Daryl Williams AM, QC, MP.

Professor Bob Montgomery, Head of Psychology, Bond University, Queensland, will provide the Keynote address and a plenary session.

Michael Flood founder of the magazine *XY men, sex, politics* will provide an insight on contemporary issues for men and present a workshop.

Local contributors include amongst others:

- Donovan Research - *Men's attitudes to counselling*
- Crime Research Centre (UWA) - *Working with adolescents to prevent domestic violence*
- Simon French (Lawyer) - *Men and family law*
- Suzanne Jenkins - *Working with male victims of sexual abuse*
- Relationships Australia - *Women working with men*
- Kinway - *Working with men to facilitate personal and relationship growth*
- Centrecare - *Narratives of men's lives*

Other issues to be addressed in workshops include:

- Issues for lone fathers;
- Issues for rural men;
- Men's health and sexuality.

Inquiries: Liz Retamal (during business hours) ☎ (08) 9443 2934; Fax (08) 9444 5410; email: aaswwa@aasw.asn.au; website: <http://www.aasw.asn.au>

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UNDERSTANDING CHILD SEXUAL OFFENDERS WHY DO I NEED TO KNOW WHEN I DON'T WORK WITH THEM?

One day workshop with
Suzanne Jenkins

Tuesday 17 November 1998 – 8.45 am to 4.30 pm
4th Floor Conference Room, Lotteries House, 79 Stirling Street,
Perth (Parking off Aberdeen Street, \$6.00 per day)

Not all social workers are employed in child protection or therapeutic settings and the consequences of child sexual abuse may not be the principal focus of the employing agency. However, often we come into contact with young adults and mature-aged persons who have experienced sexual abuse in earlier life.

The consequences of that experience will have some impact on the present circumstances of the person we are working with. As Suzanne Jenkins notes, *Once you know something about the patterns and dynamics of perpetrators' strategies, you sit differently in the interview with the person who has been abused.*

The aim of this workshop is to develop skills from an understanding of:

- how sexual offenders abuse
- the strategies adopted by survivors to keep on functioning
- recognition that supposed irrational behaviour may be functional
- societal myths about why "the other parent" did not intervene
- the impact of abuse on self-esteem
- the impact of abuse on parenting
- the impact of the experience of abuse on relationships.

Inquiries: Liz Retamal (during business hours) ☎ (08) 9443 2934; Fax (08) 9444 5410.

CONGRATULATIONS TO TWO MEMBERS

Jacqui Dodds has had a Ph.D. conferred on her for a study looking at cancer and what the diagnosis means for a diverse group of people. Her thesis was largely based on the experiences of people associated with the Cancer Support Association. Dr Dodds has been able to complete her Ph.D. while working as a practicing social worker and the AASW congratulates her.

Judy Esmond has been conferred her Ph.D. for a study on adolescent coping responses to peer pressure situations. Judy has managed this feat while working on the Branch Committee of Management. The AASW congratulates her on this achievement.