

SOCIAL WORK: PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW GRADUATES

A number of the major employers of social workers have been asked to provide an overview of the place of social work services in their organisation. These contributions have been provided to assist social workers, particularly new graduates, who are seeking employment opportunities with these organisations.

Social work at the Disability Services Commission

The Disability Services Commission (DSC) is currently in the process of a major organisational restructure likely to be completed in February 1999.

Social work professional standards and practice are overseen by the Principal Social Worker (Ms Linda Kazazi) as well as three social work supervisors (Ms Helen Lilly, Mr Harold Kimberley and Ms Cynthia Sinclair) attached to the metropolitan regions.

The DSC has a low turnover of social work staff. A large proportion of the social work staff have extensive experience and specialist skills in the area of intellectual disability and advocacy. Staff have contributed to significant reforms in government social policy lobbying for the integration and acceptance of people with intellectual disabilities in community life.

Professional social work services are available to those children, young people and adults with an intellectual disability (up to 60 years), their families and/or carers. Approximately 6,000 West Australians with intellectual disabilities are eligible and in receipt of DSC services.

Whether a person is eligible to receive regional services is determined by the members of the New Referrals Committee who meet once per week to consider new applicants for services. This committee comprises the Senior Referrals Coordinator, Principal Social Worker, Principal Consultants in Psychology and Speech Pathology as well as the Assistant Director Medical Services to assess the applicant's eligibility.

The Disability Services Commission employs up to 20 social workers to assist those children, young people and adults with intellectual disabilities eligible to receive (Level 3) regional services. Case management is offered on a one to one basis with eligible clients and their families who require intensive and immediate interventions and support.

Social work staff in metropolitan regions also provide specialist information on disability, consultancy and support to other professionals also working with children, young people and adults with disabilities. The Commission's social workers have highly specialist skills and knowledge in the areas of disability as it impacts parenting skills, behaviour and development over the entire life span. They have specific knowledge on the National and State legislative frameworks underpinning contemporary disability practice as well as provide specialist services in counselling, group work and community based support.

DSC Social Work Services will undertake social work assessments on new case referrals to the DSC's New referrals Committee. They provide professional opinions on disability related issues to staff attached to other government and non government agencies.

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DSC social workers work actively with individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families and carers – to enhance and develop the person's (or family's) ability to solve problems and manage stress and difficulties associated with various aspects of the person's day to day life.

Social workers place the individual's wishes, needs and requirements as a central focus in any planning and decision making process that may impact the person's life. They will devise strategies that will *stabilise* and *enhance* the person's quality of life in their interpersonal, work and social fields.

They will apply a range of interventions as well as draw on the knowledge and skills of other professional disciplines to jointly assist the person through a particular difficulty or situation. The focus of social work intervention is primarily directed at assisting the person with a disability attain their goals within a supportive and safe environment.


Some difficulties faced by clients with intellectual disabilities may be related to the way they are able to access transport, medical and health services, financial support, options of work, leisure and recreation to managing their parental responsibilities, their family obligations as well as being considered and participating in key decision making processes that impact their lives.

Through counselling, information, support and advice, DSC social workers also help families and carers manage and adjust to the responsibilities associated with caring for a person with an intellectual disability. Social workers have knowledge and skills across a range of areas such as grief and loss counselling, parenting skills and child behaviour management.


They provide crisis support to individuals and families as well as offer specialist support and guidance to other staff on specific areas such as out of home and alternate care, ways to ensure the protection of vulnerable individuals with disabilities as well as strategies to reduce the risk of harm. DSC social workers will advocate and represent the interests of vulnerable individuals as well as support and guide families responsible for the day to day care of the person with a disability.

DSC social workers have specific skills in managing complex and challenging situations which may involve domestic violence, marital separation, family breakdown, contested guardianship issues, abandonment and rejection, isolation and discrimination. They will liaise with key agencies such as Family and Children's Services, Ministry of Justice, Health Department of WA and the Office of the Public Advocate on situations that require intensive professional and/or interagency support.

Enquiries for employment can be made to Ms Linda Kazazi, Principal Social Worker on 9426 9322.



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Social Work in Centrelink

Duties of a new graduate social worker

1. Undertake social work activities in the Centrelink office in accordance with professional practice standards.
2. Provide social casework services to Centrelink clients in accordance with national priorities and guidelines.
3. Provide assessments of client circumstances for the purpose of eligibility determination.
4. Community liaison and developmental activities.
5. Client service delivery projects.
6. Gather and provide information on the impact of Centrelink programs on clients.
7. Training programs to develop the interpersonal skills of administrative staff.
8. Provide advice to administrative staff on the handling of specific client service situations.
9. Provide fieldwork placements for social work students in accordance with the requirements of the social work profession.

10. Provide required data for the maintenance of the Social Work Statistical System.
11. Maintain required records on social work activities.

Employment opportunities

The social work section in Centrelink does employ temporary/contract social workers, both in metropolitan offices and country offices. Duration of contracts vary depending on the need of the office.

If you are interested in temporary work within Centrelink please forward a copy of your Curriculum Vitae to:

Manager of Social Work, Mr Martin Gribbon
Centrelink Area Western Australia
GPO Box P1187
Perth WA 6844

On occasion Centrelink advertises for permanent social work positions. These are advertised in the West Australian, or other State papers, in the Professional Section. These selections are formal selections requiring the Selection Criteria to be addressed with written application.

Opportunities for training and development

The social work section of Centrelink has a strong commitment to training and development of their staff. It is a national service and employs approximately 600 social workers.

Family and Children's Services

Family and Children's Services (FCS) is a child and family welfare agency offering a wide range of services to the community. The mission of the department is to promote responsibility and growth in family and community life and to contribute to the protection and care of children.

The department has service delivery offices located throughout the state both in metropolitan and country areas. The department's recent restructure has resulted in services being delivered in the metropolitan area via specialist teams and in the country, primarily through generic teams.

Officers in the department who are involved with statutory work undertake child protection investigations, deliver services to children in care and deliver support and treatment services to families where abuse has occurred. Generally, child protection services can be delivered while the child remains in the care of their family. Where this is not safe for the child, services are aimed at timely reunification where possible.

Significant emphasis is placed on the delivery of culturally sensitive and appropriate services. This year has seen the appoint-

ment of a senior Aboriginal officer in each Zone to enhance service delivery to Aboriginal people.

Family support services provided by the department include the Best Start program, a program aimed at enabling parents of pre-school children, domestic violence victim support and advocacy, parenting information centres and parent link visiting services. Adoption services and emergency financial assistance is also part of the department's programmes. A major initiative for the coming year is the expansion of the department's adolescent support services.

The department is a major funder of non government services. Last financial year the department funded 340 non government services and 242 non government children's services.

The department is an organisation committed to creating a quality work environment for its employees. For example, the department has a supervision policy that enables the provision of on going professional supervision to staff. It also is a family friendly environment providing flexible working hours, part time opportunities, and access to parental leave.

Departmental staff also have access to a wide range of training opportunities beginning with the provision of a two week program for new employees called Foundation Training. Following on from Foundation Training, an ongoing range of specialist and skill development opportunities are available to officers.

FCS is a major employer of social workers and actively recruits social workers by having a number of positions identified solely for those with a professional social work degree. The department employs over 300 social workers in field staff positions. Each Zone also has a senior social work practitioner called the Senior Case Work Supervisor. This position is seen as a position of practice excellence in the work unit and is available for consultation and advice regarding case practice matters. Social workers are also recruited to policy and planning positions within the department.

Employment is available through permanent positions and via locum or contract work. Permanent positions are advertised in the West Australian and applicants are expected to address the selection criteria identified for the position.

For contract or locum work, social workers may send a copy of their resume to the HR Officer, Service Delivery Admin Bureau, Family and Children's Services, 189 Royal Street, East Perth with a covering letter indicating whether you are interested in metro or country positions or both. Once you are no longer available for employment please recontact the Admin Bureau so that they may remove your name from list.

Hospital Social Work

Public teaching hospitals and several private hospitals can offer new graduates locum and substantive positions. In general terms, the provision of social work services, enhances and supports the delivery of health care to clients and their relatives.

Hospital social work is a rewarding career and presents the opportunity to work with a broad client base. The work undertaken by hospital social workers requires the full use of social work skills, theories, strategies and interventions. The ability to work within a multidisciplinary team setting is crucial.

What is required?

Apart from being eligible for membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers, new graduates will be required to meet the minimum requirements for entry level social work positions; these are demonstrated:

- ability to provide an effective social work service and offer a range of interventions;
- ability to work effectively in a team setting; and
- effective interpersonal skills including verbal and written communication skills.

The desirable requirements for the job are:

- a commitment to continuing education;
- recent social work experience in a health setting;
- sensitivity to cultural and communication needs of Non English speaking people, Aboriginal people and those with hearing impairment; and
- a current motor drivers license.

There is intense competition in procuring a hospital social work position. While recognising that new graduates are unlikely to have hospital experience, student practicums in health settings do provide an opportunity to develop the required skills.

What do I do?

- Send your curriculum vitae to the Head of the Social Work Department of the Hospital to be placed on file for consideration when locum opportunities present
- Accept any opportunities to work in health related environments and gain exposure to working with the multidisciplinary team
- Watch out for advertisements in the health section of *The West Australian*.

Alcohol and Drug Authority

The Western Australian Alcohol and Drug Authority has as its primary objective the provision of prevention and treatment programs for people who are experiencing alcohol and other drug problems.

Earlier this year a partial devolution of services to the non-government sector occurred resulting in the establishment of seven regional and four metropolitan Community Drug Service Teams overseen by the WA Drug Strategy Office, under the Minister for Family and Community Services.

Since then the Authority has developed its remaining services along specialist lines. At present we provide a telephone counselling Service (ADIS); a clinical advisory service for general practitioners prescribing methadone as well as our own specialist methadone service; residential and outpatient detoxification services including counselling and the Court Diversion Service.

A new initiative, the Opiate Overdose Prevention Strategy is well underway. The Authority's library and the Clinical Education and Training program is available for inhouse and other professionals. The Research and Development section is focused on improving and evaluating clinical practices.

Social workers are employed or are eligible to be employed in all of these areas. Given a vacancy, employment is more likely if the applicant has pre-existing skills in addictions gained through a student placement or the addiction studies programs at Curtin or Edith Cowan University.

There is also a volunteer training program run jointly between Curtin University and the WAADA which consists of 80 hours tuition over a six month period and a requirement to provide supervised voluntary counselling at a non-government agency for a period of one year. This is an excellent introduction to the field and is often undertaken by students in conjunction with their academic studies.

Work in the addictions area can draw on the full range of social work roles and skills and despite the bad press our client group receives from time to time, significant lifestyle improvements are made by clients and their families, once there has been a decision to change existing patterns.

Hence there is plenty of potential for job satisfaction.

Vacant positions are advertised in the West Australian, and staff appointed in compliance with public service regulations. From time to time short term contracts arise both for relieving staff and for specific project work (usually involving some research work) which may lead to further employment if desired.

Ministry of Justice

Recruitment of staff to the Community Based Services Directorate is not determined alone on the basis of possession of a degree in Social Work. There are issues related to recruitment in remote locations, and there may be situations where an individual with particular life or cultural skills is equally competitive. The Directorate will however continue to recruit on the basis that tertiary qualifications are a desirable criteria. Those graduates with a Social Work degree or equivalent are usually appointed on a higher salary range than a non graduate.

The selection criteria for Community Corrections Officers and Juvenile Justice Officers include the following:

- provide counselling and casework services as required for offenders to address the cause of their offending behaviour, and where necessary, for their families
- identifies particular offenders with particular needs to address their offending behaviour and refers them to appropriate pro

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OLD RACISM, NEW RACISM

by Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya

As we talk glibly about playing the “race card” or engage in a “race” debate, “race” is no longer a taboo word. Seemingly this usage merely refers to how racial differences, meaning heritable differences, impinge on how we conduct ourselves in matters of public policy such as land rights or employment. But racism pertaining to how we feel about “race” is another matter; it evokes a range of emotions of hate, dislike, anger, and in particular, the unmentionable evils – those of genocide, ethnic cleansing, brutality, segregation and so on – and remains outside the domain of political discourse. Hence, when a Premier of a State berates his opponents as “racists” or a respected academic charges a “reputable” author, of “racism”, the alarm bells begin to ring with the appalling thought that the horrors of the holocaust may have been resurrected. If indeed, “racism” has returned from its “dead” past, has it come back in its old garb or disguised in some new clothing?

With the near universal acceptance of the scientific falsity of race theory, nobody in his or her right senses would in this day and age publicly proclaim the old racism, dominant throughout Australia in the last century, and inscribed in the infamous “White Australia” policy. The latter was a policy of racial exclusion enacted for a variety of reasons – historical, intellectual and political – in the earliest days of Federation. This old racism of the early part of this century was increasingly discredited in the 1950s and 1960s and various attempts were made to exorcise the evil of racism. With the emergence of post war policies of mass immigration and consequent social demographic changes, the concept of “race” was replaced by that of ethnicity, and the language of racial difference was replaced by cultural difference and cultural distinctiveness.

The assimilationist thinking about the settlement of migrants that prevailed in Australia until the 1970s was predicated on the need to maintain racial and cultural homogeneity as a basis of national unity – it was the essence of the nation. Therefore, what irked the critics of Asian immigration from Blainey to Hanson was the presumed difficulty of maintaining social cohesion in the absence of racial and cultural homogeneity. Hence, the harking back to the clarion call of those like Henry Parkes at the time of Federation in 1901, that nation building was predicated on One Nation, One Destiny, a leitmotif of advocates of One Australia and One Nation. The notion of a common culture, nay, a unique and distinctive culture which was Australian was inextricably interwoven into the definition of a nation. A primary concern was of course the need to preserve racial and cultural homogeneity as one of the main building blocks of the fledgling Australian nation. In brief, culture rather than race was employed as a means of demarcating the boundaries of acceptance and rejection of group membership, ie membership of the nation and Australian identity.

Although sentiments associated with “race” and a racial ideology based on old racism continued to persist in the popular consciousness, it was soon to be overtaken by a new racism which in Australia as in other

Western countries too (eg Britain and France) became incorporated into and made to coexist with the old racism associated with racial supremacy arising from biological differences. Central to the new racism (as it has become known in Western countries) which has emerged after World War II, is the concept of culture and nation. Exclusion, as in matters of immigration policy, is no longer justified in terms of “race”, but on a variety of grounds such as desirable cultural characteristics and/or social acceptability, such as language and other personal attributes. Thus, for Pauline Hanson, the acid test of inclusion is the ability to speak English, a code for cultural assimilation.

The point is that “difference” is no longer constructed in terms of racial or biologically determined group differences, but in terms of culture and ethnicity. These differences are all the more salient when they overlap with visible physical differences such as skin pigmentation, hair texture or eye shape. And more insidiously, these cultural differences are seen to contribute to a range of undesirable social behaviour. For example, it may be argued that something in Vietnamese culture predisposes members of that community towards criminal behaviour. The culturally different, that is, those who do not subscribe to norms and values dictated by the dominant culture, are the outsiders who are excluded from being part of the nation. These critics, not just in political lobby groups but also in academia, by exaggerating the worth and value of cultural difference have sought to exploit to their own advantage the human and liberal values of multiculturalism, such as the respect for, and tolerance of, difference. In this process, they have sought to reify certain cultural values

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as being more desirable and essential for nation building. This new ideology of racism emphasising the cultural distinctiveness of the majority groups appears more respectable and acceptable because it is framed in the language of the inevitability of cultural difference. Consequently, these attitudes to “difference” leads them to differentiate sharply between groups, ie “in” and “out” groups – “them” and “us” – on cultural grounds. In short, the critics of immigration and multiculturalism have cleverly turned on their head the policies of multiculturalism or cultural pluralism which emerged in the 1970s.

Accordingly, the racist argument is now stated primarily, though not exclusively, in terms of the language of “social cohesion” and “national unity”, and becomes linked with a strident nationalism, bordering on xenophobia. Racism is no longer a question of equality but rather one of inclusion/exclusion, of belonging and acceptance. For these reasons, racism in Europe and Australia, has entered a new phase and taken the form of a plea for the identity and respect for the culture of the majority and the exclusion of those who fail to meet the new racist criteria of belonging and identity. As one British writer put it, “ethnic minorities are no longer viewed as being inferior, rather that their presence poses a threat to the cultural integrity of the indigenous community”, and hence warrant exclusion.

It is this perceived link between culture and national identity that is central to "new racism", and increasingly evident in contemporary Australian racism, especially in that expressed by "One Nation" and similar groups. Multiculturalism is perceived by adherents of this "new racism" as a denial of the time honoured values of the Australian nation and culture, and therefore warranting rejection as being un Australian. What these critics of multiculturalism demand is to replace "racial homogeneity" with "cultural homogeneity" as the basis of an imaginary culturally based community. The antagonism of the "new racists" against the culturally different is not because of their "race", but on account of their cultural difference, for seemingly acting in ways contrary to the ethos and values of the Australian nation, the national culture.

Put simply, this new nationalism is no longer expressed as a matter of racial superiority, but in terms of cultural differentiations and cultural uniqueness. The ideology of "One Australia" and/or "One Nation", by extolling in an acceptable language the sentiments of a shrill nationalism, is at the same time one which provides a moral justification for this new racism – the exclusion of those who do not belong to the nation. The discourse of new racism serves to rationalise the social dynamics of economic competition and perceived sense of relative deprivation, and marginalise the culturally different, be they refos, wogs, or "Asians". Thus, unlike in the past, racism in contemporary Australia is expressed in a different language and terminology. This language, as in the case of One Nation or a polemical tract such as *Among the Barbarians*, is steeped in a xenophobic nationalism – the need to be Australian; it is, as a result, preoccupied with cultural homogeneity, unity, social cohesion and social harmony.

Regrettably, this conjunction of anti immigration and anti multiculturalist sentiments characteristic of "new racism" has been ignored by policy framing bodies (eg NMAC) and policy analysts because of their unwillingness to understand the need to provide the institutional framework that respects the pluralism and diversity of Australian society. The attack on racism must necessarily involve a defence of multiculturalism, of diversity and pluralism and one which is notably absent particularly in the pronouncements of John Howard as Prime Minister. Clearly, the ongoing debate about immigration as it has developed in the media through the various anti Aboriginal and anti Asian lobby groups is, among other things, about this "new racism". What we are witnessing is a new language of public discourse and an ideology of racism where culture is seen to be the determinant of a range of social behaviour and attitudes.

Make no mistake, whether legitimised by dubious academic research or not, this is racism, the "new racism" we have to contend with. And be they the people of Cabramatta, Fitzroy or North Perth, it is the excluded Australians who will face the brunt of it.

Emeritus Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya is a senior research fellow at the School of Social Work and Social Administration, University of Western Australia.

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EXPRESSION OF INTEREST Project Officer Social Work Day 19th May 1999

Expressions of interest are invited for the above mentioned position with the WA Branch for the period of 1st February to the 31st May 1999.

Social Work Day has been held annually every year since the AASW 50th Anniversary year in 1996. It is an opportunity for members to promote the social work profession nationally and locally through various community and/or social activities.

The WA Branch seeks a Project Officer for Social Work Day, 19th May 1999, to organise and promote events or activities that will promote the profession of social work in a positive way.

This could include:

- social events for members to celebrate their profession
- community or social action activities that promote the profession positively.

Promotion will be required within the membership as well as through various community and media outlets. The Project Officer may be required to network with rural and non-metropolitan members to promote Social Work Day locally in these areas.

This position will be responsible to the Committee of Management. It is a casual position and payment will be based on an hourly rate. The Project Officer will be employed for a total of 40 hours over a ten week period.

For further information please contact Branch Executive Officer – Liz Retamal (08) 9443 2934 or Branch President – Brian Wooller on (08) 9400 6500. Applications for the position close 15th January 1999.

Jayasuriya L (1991). "Racism and immigration in Australia: from old to new racism". In *Proceedings of Conference of Australian Society of Human Biology*. Perth, University of Western Australia.

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AQ and Eureka Street remain the only broadsheet type Australian journals for public comment and analysis. Recently, Current Affairs Bulletin, which existed for over 50 years was axed another "victim" of economic rationalism.

1999 Social Work Awards for Excellence Call for Nominations

It is time again to recognise excellence in the work of our social work colleagues. Nominations for the awards are now being called and a nomination form is included with this newsletter.

The inaugural awards in 1998 were very well received and the Award Categories are as for last year. However, there are several additions to the policy associated with the awards listed below. These arise from a review of the awards during the year and endorsed by the Committee of Management.

- The award categories apply to individual social workers only. It was thought that it is best to consolidate individual awards first and then develop further award categories and criteria for organisations in due course.
- The panel may make enquiries with referees and any other person(s) to obtain information to support the nomination. Giving the panel this additional scope can enhance the nomination and award.
- The social worker will not necessarily be expected to meet all criteria in each category. This clarifies the original intent.
- The panel will also include a life member or senior member of the profession. This enhances the panel membership.

As was done in 1998, the Social Work Awards for Excellence Presentation will be combined with the Social Work Student Awards and further details will be provided in a future newsletter. Consider nominating one of your colleagues for excellence in their professional practice.

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

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- grams within or outside the Ministry of Justice
- liaises with and refers to relevant departments, agencies, other professionals and individuals in order to facilitate the offender's appropriate management and
- provide case management and appropriate intervention.

As a degree in Social Work professionally equips the graduate to address these selection criteria the individual applicant has an advantage in securing employment with the Directorate. This is particularly so should a student have completed a practicum placement at one of the Directorate branches.

There is a commitment within the Directorate to provide ongoing training, in service support and to generally increasing the professional development of staff.

Permanent vacancies are only available on an infrequent basis and are competitively sought by existing contract staff as well as outside applicants. Contract employment is easier to acquire and is available on a regular basis particularly in the metropolitan area. Recruitment is now the responsibility of the local branch manager and those seeking employment are encouraged to submit written expressions of interest to the branches. Applicants who are prepared to be flexible in their choice of location of employment will obviously place themselves at an advantage.

Further information can be obtained from the Ministry's handbook, which can be obtained from the Human Resource Directorate. Phone number 9264 1001. Employment information is also available on the website at: <http://www.justice.wa.gov.au/employ/careers.htm>

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