

President's Report

This year has been a very full year for the Branch. The last major professional development event was the 'Relating to Men' Forum that the Branch undertook in association with Relationships Australia. It was an overwhelming success and we need to thank the energetic members of the Continuing Professional Educational Committee and our Executive Officer for ensuring that it was a landmark success.

Next year promises to be even busier, and while we will go into a slight recess for the silly season, we would like to call upon all members to maintain their interest, enthusiasm and energy for 1999. It is important that next year builds up for the Year 2000 and our membership continues to grow, our voice continues to be heard and social work maintains its rage for its clientele.

At the last Directors meeting and Annual General Meeting of the Association, it was resolved to take the Draft Constitution back to re-write it and consult more widely with members and Branches. The Directors have also agreed that more work needs to be done on the issue of Boards of Practice or Tiers of Membership in line with the current CPE and membership levels. It was also felt strongly that in recent time there has been an avalanche of change and that it is important to consolidate CPE, organisational structures, the Constitution, and ensure the new Code of Ethics is in place. There is also a need at the National level to consolidate the Association's finances and ensure that the accrual accounting system is in place and understood by Directors in the context of budgetary planning.

It was incredibly heartening this year to see Pauline Meemeduma's article on social work published in the West Australian. It provided a balance against the very negative view often put forward by the press, always drawing the line that social workers are 'do gooders' and more trouble than they are worth.

It was also heartening to see that the West Australian newspaper gave some space, including a pictorial for Chas Grocott a social worker who has for the last few years been retired but felt passionate enough about his profession to approach the West Australian to redress some of the negative publicity. Thanks Chas, and thanks Pauline. It is important that we are prepared as a profession to take criticism and to remain accountable but it's very heartening to see that there are our colleagues who retain pride, commitment and perseverance in the face of what is at times is

incredible weight of negative publicity loaded on to what is an incredibly difficult task. I would like to wish all members and their families the very best for the festive season and look forward to working for, and with you all in 1999.

BRIAN WOOLLER

Stolen Generation Counsellor 12 month contract in the first instance

A Tennant Creek based Aboriginal Community Health Organisation is seeking to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced person to fulfill the role of Stolen Generation Counsellor. This organisation provides a comprehensive primary health care service to the Aboriginal community of the Barkly Region.

The Stolen Generation Counsellor will be expected to provide:

- professional counselling services, within the Barkly Region, to people experiencing emotional distress or suffering as a result of experiences associated with forcible removal from family, community, culture and country, and
- education and information services, within the indigenous and non indigenous community, about the history and effects of forcible removal.

Experience in developing and implementing counselling services is essential as is experience in crisis and long term counselling and knowledge of the "Bringing Them Home Report".

Presentation, report writing and networking skills are essential as well as the ability to set work priorities, meet deadlines and work with minimal supervision.


An attractive salary package of \$39,000 - \$50,000 will be negotiated based on qualifications and experience. Rent subsidy, remote area allowance, 6 weeks annual leave and new office accommodation will be provided.

This position is expected to be filled by mid January 1999.

For application details contact Deb Ryan Tel: 08 8927 0114, Fax: 08 8927 0119

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Social Work and Mental Illness Practice Standards Project Perth Workshop

As detailed in the last AASW National Bulletin, I am managing a project for the AASW which seeks to develop practice standards for social workers in the mental health area. A special feature of the project is widespread consultation both with social work practitioners, and with consumer of mental health services, and their family carers.

As part of an Australia wide series of workshops, I recently met with a group of social work practitioners, consumers and carers, at the office of ARAFMI, in Perth. Karen Bree, a member of the project team, helped with the recording of the data generated in the workshop. Chris Coopes and Maria Harries had done a great job in setting up the meeting.

The inclusion of carers and consumers as partners in the workshop discussion grounded the process of reflection in the reality of the lived experience of mental illness and the experience of treatment. I was very impressed with the way in which all participants shared their ideas and experiences. I think people felt heard and respected. Many of us there felt proud of the profession's capacity to engage, debate, and respond to the issues raised. Of such small steps are big changes made.

I want to express my thanks to all who attended, especially to Maria and Chris who helped to organize the meeting, to the Mental Health Subcommittee who provided the contacts, and to the social workers at ARAFMI for hosting us – especially Lani.

I am very keen to hear from anyone interested in the area who may want to be consulted about the project. I am anxious to get any statements of social work activity or role, which may have been developed by practitioners in mental health agencies. The best way to contact me is via email. I would also like to hear from social work educators who may have worked on these areas in their teaching.

ROBERT BLAND

Contact details are as follows: Robert Bland, School of Sociology & Social Work, University of Tasmania, PO Box 1214, Launceston 7250. Ph 03 – 6324 3946. Fax 03 - 6324 3007 Email Robert.Bland@utas.edu.au

ASSESSORS NEEDED

The National Office of the Australia Association of Social Workers sometime ago called for expressions of interest for assessors for Schools of Social Work. As members are well aware, the situation with regard to the assessment of courses has undergone some change in the last two years.

The Association intends to develop a number of panels of assessors across Australia and train them for that purpose.

It is imperative that suitable, qualified and interested people form that panel. It is equally as important that this panel be made up of academics and practitioners so that both perspectives can be available during the assessment process.

If you are interested in joining a panel or being nominated for it, please send an expression of interest and curriculum vitae to Mr Ian Rentsch, Chief Executive Officer, AASW, PO Box 4956, Kingston ACT 2604.

News from Schools of Social Work

Edith Cowan (Bunbury Campus)

1997 marked the commencement of the new two year social work program offered by Edith Cowan University at the Bunbury campus. The first cohort of students was made up of students who had already completed two years of the social science program, as well as students who were undertaking the social work program as a post graduate qualification.

The new program has a particular specialist focus on regional and rural social work practice and cross-cultural practice, within generic social work training. Students predominantly undertake their field placements in regional and rural areas. Student placement costs for transport and accommodation are covered under the fieldwork program. The program curriculum and teaching-learning strategies are designed within a collaborative educational model, which views students and staff as colleagues, learners and teachers. The program is focused upon developing articulate, critically reflective, practice skilled social workers who can practice at a high standard of excellence.

Inquiries/applications in relation to the new social work program can be made to Dr Pauline Meemeduma on Tel: 08 9807 752; fax 08 9807 813.

Curtin University of Technology **Course developments**

The Centre for Aboriginal Studies at Curtin is inaugurating a new unit of study, Working with Aboriginal people, in semester 2 1997. This unit has been designed specially for social work students and will be taught for the program by staff from the Centre for Aboriginal Studies. Also, the BA in Family Studies, located within the School alongside the BSW, has continued to grow with its third intake this year. The School is currently exploring the possibility of a double degree structure with this program. Plans are underway for a Graduate Diploma in Counselling, which it is intended will begin in 1999.

Staff changes

The School was joined at the beginning of the year by Professor Richard Hugman (previous of Edith Cowan

University, Bunbury Campus). During the year Associate Professor Denis Ladbroke, Peter McDonald and Ron Moffatt took voluntary separation from the University, but they have not been lost from the School as they continue to play important roles having accepted adjunct appointments.

International visitors

During the later part of 1998, the School will host visits by Bob Hamilton from Glasgow University (UK) and Professor Catherine Reissman from Boston University (USA). Bob, who will be in WA from late August to the end of September, teaches, researches, and practices in youth issues, housing and community development. Catherine, visiting from late September to the end of the year, has an international reputation in qualitative research applied to social work practice, also family theory and cross-cultural research in women's issues.

University of Western Australia **Indigenous social work project**

One of the most important developments in the School in 1998 has been the appointment of Violet Bacon as the School's first Aboriginal social work lecturer. Violet is a graduate from Curtin, and has many years of experience both as a social worker and in the Training Section of the Alcohol and Drug Authority. Her role in the School is to teach across a number of subject areas, and to assist with curriculum development towards a more culturally appropriate BSW program which will equip students to work more effectively with Aboriginal people, families and communities. The School hopes that this will become a permanent position on the staff, and that this in turn will help to attract larger numbers of Aboriginal students to the BSW course.

BSW curriculum review

This year the School has undertaken an internal review of the BSW course, and it is anticipated that this will lead to a redesigned program to commence in 1999. Although the plans for the new course have yet to be finalised, it is likely that it will include an increased use of the case study and adult learning approaches to professional education, and more course

material on Aboriginal issues and on working with people from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds.

The School is also seriously considering a "1 + 3" structure for the BSW, though would still allow graduates with relevant background to complete the course in two years. We have also commenced initial discussions with the Law School about developing a combined law/social work degree course, which we believe would be an attractive option for some students.

Course developments

1999 will see the completion of the first group of students to undertake the new concurrent honours program, which requires honours students to undertake a research project as part of their final practicum and to write a dissertation during the final semester. This model has proved more attractive to students than the previous "end-on" honours program which required an extra year of study.

A major area for expansion has been in postgraduate research study. The School now has some 14 PhD students studying a wide range of topics, and a number of MA (by research) students as well.

Post graduate Curtin University of Technology

In addition to the courses mentioned under Continuing Professional Education, the School offers two research degrees, which may be taken part-time, the Master of Social Work and the Master of Arts in Social Welfare. Applicants for the former must be appropriately qualified with a degree in social work, and for the latter must be graduates with relevant experience in the field of social welfare.

Program details, fees, and other information may be obtained from the School of Social Work, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6845. Telephone 08 9266-7030; Facsimile 08 9266-3912.

University of Western Australia

See Continuing Professional Education

Edith Cowan University (Bunbury Campus)

The post graduate social work program at Edith Cowan Bunbury campus is currently being developed.

The program developed will be a product of collaborative exchanges between the Department and regional social work practitioners to identify the post graduate training needs of local workers. An open morning tea to discuss the post graduate needs of local practitioners was held on the 27th August at the Bunbury Campus. It is planned to develop a working group, composed of academics and practitioners to develop the design of the post graduate program.

Continuing Professional Education Edith Cowan University (Bunbury Campus)

Continuing Professional Education (CPE) is the translation into educational programs of the principle of professional life long education to maintain standards of excellence in the planning and delivery of social work services (CPE Policy, AASW, 1996).

CPE programs are predicated on a core principle that social work must be understood as a continuum of learning relating to the ongoing acquisition of skills, knowledge and values as determined by the needs of social work practice. This continuum of learning begins at the commencement of an undergraduate social work degree program and continues throughout the social work career life of a practitioner.

A collaborative consortium model of CPE delivery between the three Schools of Social Work and the AASW (National and State) has been proposed to the AASW National Executive in response to the call for expressions of interest.

The model is developed to allow maximum equity coverage of CPE programs throughout the State. CPE centres are identified throughout three divisional areas of Western Australia. These centres would act as points where practitioners would come for direct face-to-face contact. They would also act as a base where CPE educational materials would be held for distribution through the region.

The model centres around a multi-level structural format of CPE learning. Six structures are identified, ie post graduate, conferences, workshops, independent study, practice supervision, and agency training. It is anticipated a variety of teaching strategies would be used to deliver CPE through these formats. These teaching strategies would include face-to-face teaching, external modules, videos, CD ROM, Internet,

e-mail, video/teleconferencing, telephone. Teaching resources would be developed and purchased to use within the teaching formats.

Current planning for a CPE State-wide program has identified several planning timetable stages for the implementation of the program in 1998. The stages for CPE planning could be:

- Formation of a Western Australian CPE working group. This group will be subdivided into three regional sub-groups. These regional sub-groups will meet in Perth regularly to coordinate a State-wide program. The regional sub-groups will be composed of interested social workers from AASW, universities, independent practitioners, agencies.
- Feedback from regional sub-groups of the CPE needs of practitioners in the area.
- Development and planning for a regional CPE program.
- Development of CPE program guidelines in relation to learning objectives, teaching strategies, resource criteria, and evaluation criteria.
- Meeting of State CPE groups to coordinate planning and utilisation of CPE resources throughout the State.
- Implementation of the CPE program.
- Regular feedback and monitoring of the program.
- Evaluation of the program.
- Planning for 1999 program.

Curtin University of Technology

As part of the combined universities consortium for CPE, the School of Social Work at Curtin University will be offering:

Volunteer management - short course, weekly from February to June, facilitated by Judy Esmond.

Professional supervision* - short course, weekly from July to November, facilitated by Judy Barney.

Case management* - one day seminar, 1 November 1998, to be repeated in late 1999, facilitated by Professor Richard Hugman. The Socio-cultural Environment in Rehabilitation - an open learning approach is used, February to June, facilitated by Julie Dickinson.

Professional ethics - currently available by Distance Education

Note: * These courses are recognised for credit towards Masters level programs). Graduate Diploma in Counselling - will commence in February 1999 (subject to approval from the University).

University of Western Australia

As in 1998, the School will make available a number of units from the Graduate Diploma course, to social workers wishing to take them as part of continuing professional education. This is a good way to keep up-to-date, through some serious but relevant study programs which will accrue AASW CPE points. It is possible to enrol for a full unit (three full Saturdays) or for one or two of the day sessions, according to interest.

The School is planning to offer the following units in 1999:

Semester 1

Advanced social work theory and practice

This is a very popular unit which consists of a review of the status of contemporary social work theory, and which discusses a number of important practice issues. Participants have an opportunity to reflect on their practice since graduation (whether it be for 2 years or for 20!)

Social work research and evaluation

This unit enables participants to revisit social research design and methodology, and to examine the role of research in contemporary practice. Both qualitative and quantitative designs are included, and the unit helps participants to develop specific skills in research which will be useful in contemporary organisational settings.

Supervision and management

This unit will be split into two modules, one on enhancing skills in professional supervision, and the other on principles of management as applied specifically to the practice of case management. Participants can enrol for either or both.

Semester 2

Statutory practice: legal issues

This unit will concentrate on legal requirements in statutory practice, such as duty of care, liability, negligence, legal responsibilities, disclosure and confidentiality, giving evidence, etc

Contemporary social policy

This unit will examine and analyse the policy context of contemporary practice, including a consideration of issues such as privatisation, the purchaser-provider split, globalisation, racism and the retreat from tolerance, and social work in the post-welfare state era. Strategies will be developed to help social workers cope with policy change.

Working with youth

This unit will examine both policy and practice issues relating to young people in contemporary society. Social work responses, at both levels, will be critically analysed.

- Associate Professor Pauline Meemeduma (Department of Rural Community Studies, Social Work Program, Edith Cowan University)
- Professor Jim Ife (University of Western Australia)
- Professor Richard Hugman (Curtin University of Technology)

Churchill Fellowship for Overseas Study

In response to the International Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1996) Taskforce report, the WA Government has allocated funding for several Churchill Fellowships to investigate ways to eradicate poverty. A Fellowship will be awarded annually until 2006.

The Fellowships funded by Family and Children's Services will be awarded to a person living in WA to undertake research on:

- the social and economic costs of poverty;
- strategies for social and economic prosperity; or
- other social policy research relevant to poverty issues at a practice level.

Preference will be given to innovative proposals which are focused on linking research with practical strategies rather than pure or applied research.

It is expected that the Fellowship will be taken up between 1 January and 31 August 2000. The Fellowship will pay travel and living expenses for a 4 to 10 weeks study tour overseas (longer if appropriate).

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NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

Marie-Joséphé Adam (Student Associate)
Theresa Andrews (Student Associate)
Belinda Beeck (Student Associate)
Ann Burns (Ngala Family Resource Centre)
Andrea Cartwright (Holyoake Institute)
Denise Chapple (Student Associate)
Sandra Cheema (Student Associate)
Michelle Collins (Student Associate)
Susan Cordell (Ngala Family Resource Centre)
Chelsea Crabtree (Student Associate)
Marcella Cranny-Connolly (Student Associate)
Susan Dartnell
Kirsty Doygun (Student Associate)
Sharon Easton (Student Associate)
Kurt Egan (Richmond Fellowship)
Natalie Hall (Family and Children's Services)
Frith Hart (Student Associate)
Lei Healy (Student Associate)
Naomi Hughman (Student Associate)
Sarah Jarman (Student Associate)
Judith Jenkinson (Student Associate)
Wendy Krieves (Student Associate)
Sandra McGhie (Student Associate)
Sonya McKenzie (Student Associate)
Vincent McMaster (Ministry of Justice)
Patricia Mentiplay (Student Associate)
Jason Miles (Student Associate)
Noreen Moncrieff (Student Associate)
Daniella Neagu (Student Associate)
Van Phan (Student Associate)
Crystal Plowright (Student Associate)
Hayley Priestley (Student Associate)
Louise Prince (Student Associate)
Melanie Samuels (Student Associate)
Carmella Scaffidi (Student Associate)
Kylie Small (Student Associate)
Katherine Sweet (Student Associate)
Wayne Thomas (Student Associate)
Beverley Turner (Disability Services Commission)
Danielle Williams (Student Associate)

Social workers the quiet almost silent achievers! by Lina Ciavarella

As a graduating student of social work I believe there is a need to raise awareness levels and increase recognition of the profession. Traditionally social workers have worked alongside disadvantaged and minority groups and individuals, caught up in the day to day micro tasks of social work. I believe this leaves no time for social workers to tackle larger scale macro issues. This has been to their detriment as they have failed in the process, of developing a strong identity of their own.

The profession needs to empower itself and assert its value and worth in order to claim a position in society. It is more than just the helping profession and as such should be recognised for the contribution it makes to society. Maybe with a firmly established identity, individuals could access the services that they require.

“Social work has never been a single entity, and all generalisations about it... run the risk of over-simplification ... social work had several historical origins... These different and conflicting origins, ... mean that social work has always been a complex and pluralistic occupation, whose essential nature has been strongly contested.” (Ife, 1997, p. 3).

It is time to liberate the oppressed from their shackles, profess to the masses who we (social workers) are and what we can do.

As a student I am constantly confronted by this lack of knowledge as I am asked by others, ‘What exactly is social work?’ As a result I have become consumed by my passion to conscientise the profession. For it concerned me greatly that a lot of what I was learning was contained in the classroom and academic system lessening its value and effect. There is a need to expand society’s thinking about the profession of social work to dispel the common myths and judgements that serve to unfairly label the profession.

“Locked into one logic or pattern of thinking, we make and accept judgements solely on the basis of what

is familiar, whereas with an ‘open mind’ we are open both to new ideas and to the way we process those ideas: we are capable about thinking.” (Kelly & Sewell, 1991, p. 12).

Education as a mechanism of expanding thinking and as an anti-oppressive approach to practice is in accordance with the *AASW Code of Ethics, Standards of practice, 4.1 Commitment to social justice states,*

“The social worker will act to ensure that all persons have access to the resources, services and opportunities which contribute to their well being”.

Access to such opportunities is part of my own commitment to social justice however in conjunction with *4.2 Development of knowledge*, takes this one step further. By ensuring people have an awareness first of such resources through educative processes.

To reiterate this point, Freire (1993, p. 90) talks about the concept of increasing awareness in terms of thinking and education. He states,

“(i)ntervention in reality-historical awareness itself thus represents a step forward from emergence, and results from the conscientizacao [conscientisation] of the situation.”

Hence the need to generate thinking in the community around the area of social work instead of retaining such knowledge within the profession itself.

This idea is supported by Leonard (1997, p. 98) who states,

“those outside the discipline ... may need to be exposed from time to time to hearing or reading the exclusive and esoteric technical language of the discipline in order to produce an acknowledgment of its particular truth”.

For the duration of my university degree I have been fighting an uphill battle, trying to frame up an explana-

tion of social work with words and language common to my ears but foreign to the listener. I am astonished to find that people outside of the social work realm cannot grasp core concepts and principles, due to the technical and academic language used to describe them exclusive to this discipline simply because they have never been exposed to it before.

Hence in conjunction with a lack of familiarity of key terms and phrases that limits people's knowledge around the area of social work is the fact that this language is not readily and easily related to the people's perception of reality.

"In order to communicate effectively, educator and politician must understand the structural conditions in which the thought and language of the people are dialectically framed." (Freire, 1993, p. 77).

Consequently individuals within society are not able to apply the terms, as they do not understand them, hence the usefulness of the language is lost.

Social workers must take on the role of demonstrating this link between the personal and the political.

"A key lesson of current social change movements is that social change must be grounded in a linkage between the personal and political. A central challenge to social work is to connect the individual and the collective, the personal and the social." (Fisher & Karger, 1997, p. 45).

It is imperative to illustrate how the individual in society can be influenced by the collective effort and conversely how the collective can be influenced by the individual and thereby a sense of change may prevail. My own personal efforts (writing this article) to create change is borne out of my realisation that promoting social work is a political effort that is often brandished by larger structural impediments.

The Overview edition of *The West Australian Social Worker* is published bi-monthly by the WA Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers (ACN 008 576 010). Services, products, opinions and enclosures are not considered as necessarily endorsed by the AASW nor represent its policy. Contributions are accepted on the understanding they may be subject to editorial revision.

However one must acknowledge certain risks in conscientising the profession and its associated language and knowledge base.

"Specialised professional knowledge appears to benefit clients by being useful to helping them, it may through the power relations involved in creating a profession, oppress them by confirming the dominance of educated people over them." (Payne, 1997, p. 30).

There is a fine line to tread between increasing individuals knowledge of social work in order for them to be aware of what social work can provide and confirming their marginalisation due to this particular lack of knowledge.

In conclusion, as a soon to be practicing social worker I will continue my fight to level the playing field by increasing people's awareness of the profession. In the hope that those needing particular services will be able to access them without being influenced by the stale and false misrepresentation that social work has been plagued with in the past and even now.

Lina wrote this article when she was a fourth year student with the social work course at Edith Cowan University. She graduated at the end of 1998.

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Upon return the Fellow will be required to provide a report of the study project and use the knowledge gained to help West Australians break the cycle of poverty.

Details may be obtained by sending a self addressed and stamped envelope (12x24cm) to The Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, 218 Northbourne Avenue, Braddon ACT 2612.

An information booklet and application forms are available on the internet at: http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/churchill_fellowships.

For further information telephone the Churchill Trust on (02) 6247 8333. Applications for the Family and Children's Services WA Churchill Fellowships, including references, close on 28 February 1999.

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