



# THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

## President's Report

I was wondering what to write this time as the President's Report and it struck me while I was sitting at Rangeview Remand Centre that we are often placed in very difficult positions in some of the jobs we find ourselves in, particularly in this day and age.

For those of you who don't know, the group workers working in the various juvenile institutions decided to take stop work action and strike. The Ministry of Justice then approached its managerial staff to look after the young detainees during the strike period.

It was rather an unsettling experience to be one of those "strike breakers" all be it unpaid, voluntary and representative of management. To have to cross picket lines having completed working long hours in a relatively unfamiliar role, was somewhat difficult, and for me, posed the dilemma of being supportive of the industrial action in relation to the issues but unable to leave young people in what would have been appalling conditions if they had had to be locked down in their cells for lengthy periods of time.

On balance the decision I made was to help out in the institutions. Whether this was the right or easiest decision is somewhat perplexing.

I wonder how often we in our professional life are faced with the dilemma of having to make a choice between issues that have merit and actions that are necessary even though they may conflict with the issue of merit, as happened on this occasion.

In times of increasing privatisation, of the tightening of public purse strings, of increasingly difficult behaviour on the part of juvenile detainees with re-

gards to drug activities, of a kind that may have differed from what was seen ten, fifteen or twenty years ago.

It is important for all of us to understand the stresses and pressures and face squarely the social dilemmas. But in doing so, we also need to take cognizance of the importance of even the more disadvantaged than ourselves.

Whether my personal decision to be involved in action contrary to my values in relation to industrial relations or not was right, it is something I feel unable to judge. But the more important issue should, I believe, be the issue that relates to fair treatment of young juvenile detainees and issues of human rights. They do have a right to be fed properly, to be cared for and to be able to leave their cells.

Strike action by the group workers precluded them from that right but at the same time was industrial action based on issues about which they were to some extent right.

The profession even in the realms of management, is a profession that contains constant and never ending dilemmas that we are all faced with on a day to day basis. The question of right or wrong decision, is often one that is not simple to answer. At the end of my final shift, as I was writing this, I thought will fairness and common sense hold sway? Time would tell.

**BRIAN WOOLLER**

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

# News from Schools of Social Work

## News from the School of Social Work, Curtin University

1998 saw a number of significant changes for the School of Social Work, both in the teaching programs and among the staff group. The year began with the launch of a new Graduate Diploma in Human Services (Counselling) that provides a one-year full-time (or equivalent part-time) course for graduates with some relevant experience.

The initial intake was heavily subscribed, with a cohort of students including social workers, teachers, nurses, psychologists and people from more diverse backgrounds beginning the program. A similar cohort has just been enrolled for 1999.

Late on in the year plans were finalised to add the option of an MA by coursework for appropriately qualified students, that will compliment the existing Master of Social Work by coursework (that itself has been updated) and the higher degrees by research. For social workers, these programs add to the range of opportunities in Continuing Professional Education. Further post-graduate and post-qualification developments will be considered in 1999.

The other main program change was a review of the BA (Family Studies). Although this degree had provided an element of variety to the work of the School, numbers had not reached the point of viability for such a degree and the difficult decision to wind up the course was made. In the immediate future the School will be concentrating at undergraduate level on the Bachelor of Social Work.

For the staff the visit of Professor Catherine Riessman from Boston USA in 1997 provided a focus for the continued development of narrative work in teaching and research. Following from that visit, the School will be hosting Professor Ruth Dean, also from Boston, in early 1999.

Other major activities in the School were a research project by Don Chandraratna and Fran Crawford into poverty among ethnic minority migrants. Towards the

end of the year Richard Hugman's new book, *Social Welfare & Social Value*, was published by Macmillan. It analyses the challenges posed to social work and related professions from changes in social policy and the wider society.

In 1999 we will see some temporary changes among the staff group itself. Don Chanraratna will be in Sri Lanka for at least six months, to be the inaugural head of the new School of Social Work that has grown from the work of the National Institute for Social Development, and to oversee the introduction of a Bachelor of Social Work.

For 1999 the School is very pleased to welcome to the staff Phil Connors, Pauline Marsden and Pendo Mwaiteleke.

**RICHARD HUGMAN**  
**FEBRUARY 1999**

## ATTENTION

### AASW Members Working in the Pilbara & Kimberley

Are you interested in having representation at AASW WA Branch level, as well as meeting with other social workers to discuss the specific and often unique issues that arise for us as workers in "the north"?

Some issues already identified include:

- Access to CPE accredited training
- Professional isolation
- Supervision
- Networking.

**For further information please contact:**  
**Bronwyn Chalker – 9144 0381**  
**Lanie Pianta – 9144 1111**

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# John and Jane's Sword of Damocles

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## Setting the scene

John and Jane are a young married couple who were well on the way to a rewarding life; John was a qualified tradesman and was doing well with an established business. However, in 1996, at the age of 24, John suffered a back injury at work and was not able to return to work. He received workers' compensation payments for an extended period of two years, but was not advised during this time to engage a rehabilitation provider to assist in a return to some form of work. His wife Jane, seeing as they have been married a few years, has been keen to start a family.

In May 1998 John received a lump sum of \$70,000 in full settlement of his compensable claim. He and Jane were delighted with this result as they could make a substantial contribution towards their mortgage, and they also now had the funds to support the initial costs of raising a baby.

## And the sword falls

John and Jane now realise that the sword of Damocles is hanging over their heads. They have been told that they will not receive a penny from Centrelink for the next sixteen months, which puts them in a horrendous situation. By this stage they have already spent all the \$70,000, unfortunately having been given no access nor having sought accurate advice on this score. This includes Maternity Allowance, which Jane was hoping for. John soon finds out that it is very difficult for him to find suitable work on his own with a history of a workers compensation claim

## How to avoid the sword

John and Jane would have greatly benefited from accurate information from a social worker and Centrelink prior to the settlement of John's claim. In particular, if they had gained sound advice on the need to access rehabilitation while it was available, some of the issues arising could have been avoided. It is important to note the following:

- Changes to the Western Australian workers' compensation legislation have impacted significantly on workers' rights and obligations.
- The link which Centrelink and CRS Australia can provide to professional vocational rehabilitation and sound advice would assist significantly in avoiding the above pitfalls
- The effects of preclusion periods for Centrelink benefits are of great significance to most people in situations similar to John and Jane's.
- The role of rehabilitation should not be underestimated for people with workers' compensation, motor vehicle, common law, personal accident and/or any injury that affects their capacity to gain or maintain employment.

CRS Australia can provide a wide range of services to people like John and Jane and also to people with different sets of needs as follows.

### Vocational rehabilitation programs

CRS Australia has a long history of providing return to work

services to injured workers and those with disabilities. This involves working closely with the individual and the treating medical practitioner and other health professionals to assist them address physical and psychological barriers in a non-threatening manner.

Our staff of psychologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and social workers identifies the clients' skills, aptitudes and interests in appropriate fields of work. If they can't return to their previous job or industry, the rehabilitation consultants assist the employer and employee in identifying modified duties where required or work with the client in searching for suitable work.

These programs can include:

**Physical work performance evaluation.** This is a scientific assessment of an individual's capabilities for performing physical work, which can be used to evaluate physical work performance after an injury or prolonged illness. This evaluation, known in shortened form as the PWPE can also determine physical work abilities prior to employment, qualifications for disability compensation and guidelines for a work hardening or work reconditioning program.

**Ergonomic workstation assessments.** Occupational therapists are able to assess and provide ergonomic recommendations for individual work site arrangements. Issues such as postural education, the need for regular alteration of posture and use of exercises are addressed. Recommendations for safe equipment usage for the optimal ergonomic environment are also provided.

**Vocational assessment and job preparation.** Where an individual is not able to return to the previous job, CRS Australia can assist them with an individual vocational assessment and job preparation service. This can include:

- Analysis of interests, skills, aptitudes and values
- Recommendations regarding future job options
- Preparation of an effective resume
- Labour market research
- Positive presentation of disability
- Interview preparation and presentation

**Job search and canvassing.** Rehabilitation consultants will also assist an individual to search for suitable work with a variety of job search and canvassing techniques.

With the exception of the PWPE, which can only be administered on a one-to-one basis, all of the other services described are offered in groups as well as individually.

If members of the AASW would like to find out more about how CRS Australia can save their clients from the metaphorical sword, they are welcome to contact Shelley Jung of CRS Australia North Metropolitan region on 94018512 or 93012099 or on Email at [shelley.jung@crsrehab.gov.au](mailto:shelley.jung@crsrehab.gov.au)

## NEW GRADUATES

### New Graduates Subcommittee and Associate Members

### A Question and Answer Forum

**31<sup>st</sup> March 1999, 7.30pm - 9.00pm**  
**Curtin University**  
**Building 204 Room 126**

We will have a panel of invited guests who will try and answer your questions on a range of topics from AASW membership to employment options. This is an open forum and we urge any recent graduates, students or associate members to attend.

In order to anticipate the number of people attending, we ask that you express your interest by contacting:

**Dave Jones (Convenor)**  
**Tel: 9480 5500 (W), 9498 5138 (H)**  
**Fax: 9439 5176**  
**email: ruahkwin@upnaway.com**

### Calling all Recent Graduates and Associate Members

Are you interested in becoming involved in our Branch Sub-Committee? We will hold regular meetings throughout the year and encourage your participation. For further information contact:

**Dave Jones (Convenor)**  
**Tel: 9480 5500 (W), 9498 5138 (H)**  
**Fax: 9439 5176**  
**email: ruahkwin@upnaway.com**

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## COMING CPE EVENTS

**Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> May 1999**

### 2 day workshop

Presenter: Suzanne Jenkins

### *Negotiating Behaviour Change – Motivational Interviewing*

Motivational Interviewing is a directive, client-centred interviewing/counselling style that can be used to help clients explore and resolve ambivalence about behaviour change. This workshop aims to provide information about 'the spirit' and the principles of Motivational Interviewing within a skills based forum.

Further details will be published with the April edition of the newsletter.

**Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May**

### 1 day forum

### *The Business of Aging*

Presenters: Keynote speaker, panel presentation, seminar.

The forum will provide an opportunity to discuss and review topical issues in this area.

Further details will be published with the April edition of the newsletter.

## NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

John Ballard  
Carolin Berry (Student Associate)  
Allyson Cawthorn (Student Associate)  
Tania Gonsalves (Student Associate)  
Michael Hadley (Student Associate)  
Maryann Howley (Health Department of WA)  
Maureen Lynch (Peel Health Service)  
Sandra Manassis (Relationships Australia)  
Catherine Mason  
Nicola McArthur (Student Associate)  
Susan Standing  
Julia Szabo (Student Associate)