



# THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

## SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL REFORM IN SOCIAL WORK SOME REFLECTIONS BY PROFESSOR LAKSIRI JAYASURIYA

### Introductory remarks

The Branch was privileged to have Professor Jayasuriya as guest speaker at the presentation of the Social Work Awards for Excellence and Social Work Student Awards on 27 April. The text of his address is reprinted below.

*At the end of 1992, Professor Laksiri Jayasuriya retired as Foundation Professor of Social Work and Social Administration and Director of the Centre for Asian Studies at the University of Western Australia.*

*The 21 years of his association with the social work course at the University is a truly remarkable story, in which the evolution of the School of Social Work can be seen to have paralleled his own career. He nurtured the fledgling course to a highly rated academic program. Over this time, he also played an instrumental role in the shaping of Australia's policy on multi culturalism and he has seen changes in attitudes and understanding of Australia's place in the Asian region.*

*Professor Jayasuriya has a distinguished record of achievements through participation in numerous public bodies involved in multicultural issues as well as welfare and social policy issues. His involvements include:*

- *the Migrant Task Force in WA;*
- *the Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee;*
- *the WA Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs Commission as a founding member;*
- *Board of Governors of the Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS); and*
- *Vice President, WACOSS.*

*In 1984 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia.*

*Professor Jayasuriya first encountered the University of Western Australia in 1951 when, on transit from Sri Lanka to Sydney University, where he was to do a double major in psychology and anthropology, he had taken a quick look at the campus while his boat had a quick stopover in Fremantle.*

*After graduating, he was offered a teaching position at Sydney University, then went to London where he received his PhD from the London School of Economics and Political Science. In a distinguished academic career before he came to the University of WA, he also held*

*teaching posts in London and Sri Lanka, was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of California and a Leverhulme Fellow at the University of New South Wales. He has also published widely.*

*Professor Jayasuriya's career has not been without controversy, sometimes at considerable cost to himself. He is a man with a great deal of zeal and intellectual capacity and has a robust international reputation as a scholar and a man of commitment.*

*Recently, as part of the 50th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he was one of a number of people acknowledged by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission for their contribution, in Laki's case for his contribution to migrants and in the area of community relations.*

*We take pleasure in congratulating you, Laki, on this acknowledgement and on your achievements. We also invite you to share some of your thoughts with us on this important occasion where we are also acknowledging excellence in social work student and colleague achievements.*

### Professor Jayasuriya's Address

I would like to use this occasion to reflect on the achievements of Australian social workers, especially the role they have played in Australian social reform and social change. Social reform is unquestionably a part of social work activity. Admittedly these reflections are largely influenced by my own experience as a social work researcher and educator over the last three decades, and also

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my involvement in public affairs. Much of this has been in the broad area of immigration and ethnic affairs.

In this context, I would like to draw your attention to the work of two pioneers in the early days of Australian social work—one a practitioner the other an educator—who had an important influence in social change and social reform. The practitioner played a leading role in the domain of social work practice relating to thinking about the settlement of immigrant settlers, their social absorption into Australian society; and the other, the educator's contribution was in the area of recruitment policy.

There is no doubt that Australian society has been radically transformed because of the close link between immigration and economic development. Many forces, persons and events—domestic and international—have contributed to these changes, and in this process the profession of social work too has played an important role in fashioning these changes and particularly in managing change. This contribution regrettably has so far gone unnoticed and hardly acknowledged. Let me explain.

When Australia embarked on a well orchestrated and bipartisan policy of mass migration in the late 40s and 50s, it made a significant departure from earlier policies by the decision to deviate from the strict preference for British immigrants and permit in a somewhat pragmatic fashion the entry of waves of European immigrants. However, while deviating from British migration, the philosophy of settlement still remained committed to the orthodoxy of the day—namely, a policy of assimilation based on monocultural conformity.

Put differently, it stated: shed your alien ways and become a good Aussie! In short, there was a strong insistence not just on racial homogeneity but on the need for cultural homogeneity—a monocultural anglo-celtic society and culture.

Importantly, this new thinking about migration and settlement was carefully orchestrated and regulated by the State. And it is only recently that several writers have drawn pointed attention to the critical role of the bureaucracy and the Department of Immigration in ensuring the successful implementation of migration policy—recruitment as well as settlement. There is no doubt that government bureaucracy at State and Commonwealth levels worked effectively in grappling with the magnitude of the problems they confronted in facilitating the adaptation of new settlers.

The recent research of Ann-Marie Jordan<sup>1</sup> based on archival records has gone a long way to show how much the success of the immigration program depended on the work of the Settlement Division of the Department of Immigration. We now know that this was largely due to the pathfinding work of an influential social work pioneer—Hazel Dobson. It was her report in 1948/49 on the settlement of refugees which revealed a range of problems—in particular, those of mental health and accommodation—that led to the establishment of a new unit in the Department of Immigration: the Social Welfare Section. Much to the surprise of Ms Dobson, her report was taken seriously by the Department, and as she

noted, the Department recognised the need for trained professional staff to deal with the problems of migrants. Dobson was initially hesitant in making her policy recommendations, but fortunately for her, her ideas fell on the receptive ears of one senior bureaucrat, Mr GC Watson who proceeded to implement her ideas. And so with the establishment of this Social Welfare Section, Australia embarked on one of the most successful social experiments dealing with the integration of migrants.

This unit was established as early as 1949, in fact, just four years after the establishment of the Commonwealth Department of Immigration. This Section had a cadre of 39 fully qualified professional social workers and was the first Commonwealth Department to employ social workers. Bearing in mind that these were the very early days of social work training in Australia, this facet of Australian social work is a truly notable event and warrants much greater attention than it has been accorded.

From 1949 onwards, the human problems created by having to settle migrants drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds and unaccustomed to the social and political institutions and associated practices of the host society were handled sensitively with professional expertise by this new Division. As one social worker is reported to have said, the Department had two 'cultures': in one there were the 'getters' and in the other the 'keepers'. The 'keepers' comprising the Social Work Section constituted the 'human face' of Australian immigration and the relationship between these two cultures was difficult and strained.

Until Ann-Marie Jordan's research based on access to records in the Department of Immigration, little was known of this aspect of Australian social work, and in particular, of the remarkable career of this pioneering social worker, Hazel Dobson. What stands out is not only her capacity for innovative thinking about policy and practice, but her dedicated commitment to professional work which displayed a perceptive awareness of the interplay between social policy and social work way of thinking which, incidentally goes back to early days of social work in Britain (eg, the work of T.H. Green and the Bosanquets of Oxford).

The client-centred model of social work, characteristic of case work, dominated the work of pioneering social workers like Dobson and her colleagues; but this did not deter them from exercising their commitment to professional autonomy and a strong sense of professional responsibility. It was these professional values and standards which impelled them while engaged in practice-oriented work to work towards social reform and social change. There is no doubt that the important changes in settlement policy which took place in the late 1960s would not have occurred if not for the pathfinding work of people like Dobson and her band of social workers throughout the country.

As a result of their work, the language of policy discourse shifted from assimilation to integration as a prelude to rejecting 'assimilationism' as a philosophy of settlement. This initial change of policy pointed importantly to a move away from a policy of hard assimilation to one which gave greater recognition to the needs of the culturally different and a willingness to accept these differences. In fact, these new policies and practices, such as

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language services for the culturally different, identified in the renamed Integration Section of the Department, laid the groundwork for what came to be recognised as multicultural social policies following the Galbally Report in the 1980s.

There is no doubt that social workers in the Department of Immigration functioned as a part of a public agency. As such, they had a mandate to perform a variety of tasks necessary to implement official policies, all of which were designed to facilitate individual adaptation of new comers, in short, their rapid social absorption into the wider society. There is no question that in performing these tasks, these social workers sought to seek the compliance of their clients with government policy, and to this extent, they may be seen as agents of social control. But, as we gather from the outstanding professional work of social workers like Dobson, one can perform these tasks in a bureaucratic setting paying due regard to one's sense of professional autonomy and responsibility.

The principle of professional responsibility requires that professionals execute their respective tasks with their specialist knowledge and competence in a manner best suited to meet the needs and interests of their clients; in other words, they have a moral obligation, where necessary to strive to bring about changes in agency policy to serve the needs and interests of their clients.

This is no easy task and requires that professionals, unlike other workers, always look reflexively at their work and act independently and responsibly. Accordingly, on occasions, professionals may resort to a variety of strategies to seek to modify conditions affecting their clients and moulding policies to improve the circumstances of their clients. This is exactly what occurred with the policy changes in the settlement area, all of which were markedly influenced by the work of the pioneers of social work in the Department of Immigration.

It remains to credit of the social work profession that it was able to ensure that the problems they had to deal with in relation to their clients were on the whole dealt fairly, with understanding and sensitivity by the provision of a range of settlement services such as accommodation, orientation, English language training and education. Admittedly, the agency mandate, namely to achieve Calwell's target of settlement, the full fledged social integration of newcomers within a period of 5 years was clearly an impossible and unrealistic target. It was the work of Dobson and her colleagues that provided the impetus for change and to introduce a more comprehensive settlement program to facilitate social absorption without causing undue hardship to settlers and also at the same time gaining their trust and support for these policies

The pragmatic attitude to social change shown by Hazel Dobson and her co-workers required, above all, learning to work with the bureaucracy and seeking ways and means of bringing out about desired changes within the broader framework of the agency's mandate. This is by no means an easy task. In the case of Hazel Dobson and her co-workers it is clear that one strategy effectively used by these social workers was to use their first hand knowledge of client circumstances as well as relevant social research findings as a basis of social action leading to changes of policy and practice.

However, to be an effective agent of social change, professionals working within the bureaucracy also need to have a good understanding of the nature and structure of the organisation in which they work, and particularly to have good insight into the nature of power structures, the sources of power and the authority systems of the organisation.

Here again, Hazel Dobson's performance record and achievement in bringing about desirable social changes bears testimony to her undoubted skills in working effectively with bureaucracy to implement reform. Not only did she have a good knowledge of the bureaucratic structure, but she was also endowed with some outstanding personal attributes and qualities of leadership which helped her greatly in working with officialdom. It so happened in her case that she had personal access to influential political figures. In this case no other than the Minister, Arthur Calwell, and later Mr GC Watson whom she must have known through Calwell because Mr Watson was at one time private secretary to the Minister. Dobson as the Senior Social Worker reported to Watson who was Asst. Secretary responsible for social welfare and other related settlement services.

Perhaps this favourable and supportive working relationship within some of the bureaucratic hierarchy enabled Dobson and her professional colleagues to effect and to use to good advantage the knowledge and information they had about the settlement experiences of migrants in bringing about desirable changes in policy and practice. In this way, she was able to secure attention and also to have some insight in how to control the timing of when to act on policy changes. These circumstances certainly helped Dobson to implement her ideas for reform and change. Indeed, as one of her colleagues put it, she was a visionary with ideas which were long before her time and not acceptable to the public service.

## II

Let me now turn to look at the contribution of a pioneer social work educator in social reform, another visionary. This is also drawn from immigration policy and concerns immigration reform relevant to recruitment policies, in particular the policy changes with regard to the introduction of a non-discriminatory policy of migrant recruitment. Here, we come across the outstanding contribution of Audrey Rennison<sup>2</sup> who was the Head of Social Work at UNSW in the late 1960s. As mentioned previously, Australian immigration policy was from its very inception based on the need to maintain racial and cultural homogeneity. Although changes in settlement policy we have considered in the context of the work of Dobson and others were to make a serious dent on the question of cultural homogeneity, racial homogeneity continued to be one of the sacred cows of Australian capitalism (the other two being trade and wages protection).

For a variety of reasons, social and political, domestic and foreign policy, as well as internal political influences, there was in the 1960s a strong push towards immigration reform from people seeking to put an end to what was known as the White Australia policy. The debate on this policy and its negative impact on Australia's international standing began in the 1960s with the lobbying of the Immigration Reform Group (IRG), largely a group of Melbourne middle class intellectuals, academics and professionals. An important member of this Group was the late

Audrey Rennison who, though in substantive agreement on the need for reform, differed on the specifics of the proposals put forward by the IRG.

The prime concern of the IRG, while pleading for the freer entry of non-Europeans was to ensure maximum capacity of absorption of such immigrants in particular, to avoid racial strife and tension. The Reform Group argued that the level of such an intake of non-European migrants should be governed solely by the capacity to absorb migrants without social or economic strain. This absorption capacity was to be determined by avoiding four dangers: 'economic competition, concentration on low status jobs, housing congestion and failure to integrate successfully'. As they put it 'let us keep the doors wide open as we safely can' (p 290). In other words, they were prepared to impose some restrictions to the immigration of non-Europeans.

It was this utilitarian pragmatic approach to reform which irked Rennison. In a dissenting Personal Statement<sup>3</sup> she deviated from the broad policy perspective advocated by the IRG, which without advocating a quota system, suggested a form of controlled admission of non-Europeans. In her dissent from the Group's proposals, she argued boldly, stating why she could not accept a viewpoint which 'sees racial discrimination as ideally wrong but expediently necessary' (p293). This dissent still remains one of the most powerful statements against racism and an argument in favour of racial equality. One which, in fact, was endorsed by the Whitlam government in 1972 when it adopted a policy of non-discriminatory migration.

Let me quote Rennison:

*I cannot accept that because some black people may be less popular, more feared than other dark skinned people, therefore to anticipate and prevent possible disharmony we may need to discriminate among people of the same nationality. I start from the premise that discrimination on the grounds of race is wrong and always wrong. It can never be justified on the grounds of expediency. A black American is exactly the same with respect to immigration to Australia as a white American.*

In the Statement, Audrey Rennison went on to explain why she disagreed with the control criteria of the IRG and explained cogently the principles from which she derived her stand. For example, on the question of controlling by ways of achieving occupational balance and preventing segregating immigrants in low status occupation, Rennison's response was sharp and to the point. She argued that the answer was not to exclude those who cannot be located appropriately in the stratification system, but rather 'to encourage social mobility' which she added somewhat hopefully was 'the kind of measures we are beginning to see as essential to promote the interests of our own Aboriginal people' (p 295).

The concluding paragraph of her dissenting statement warrants repetition because it has a powerful message for policy makers.

Sometimes every country must do things that are dictated by conscience rather than reason, the consequences of which cannot



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be gauged in advance. In immigration policy, this means accepting people who by normal canons of social planning are not judged to be a good risk. To date, Australia has accepted some refugees on this basis thought still mainly with one eye on the economic advantages.

The policy of accepting refugees from war and political tyranny should, however, be backed by the provision of such social services as are necessary, including, if required, pensions for the elderly and the handicapped. Australia could well afford wholehearted gestures of this kind. ... In accepting such migrants who, like the aged and the handicapped, are perhaps at greater risk of becoming a 'charge upon the community' than more sophisticated newcomers, we must accept also the responsibility to provide whatever special services and assistance are found necessary.

### III

Let me conclude by expressing the hope that as we come to learn about the life and work of pioneers such as Dobson and Rennison, that there will be a greater interest in researching and documenting the achievements of the social work profession over the last four decades. This is long over due and warrants some positive steps to encourage new research into the history of the social work profession - as well as social work education.

Above all, we need on celebratory occasions such as this to acknowledge the outstanding contributions and achievements of the likes of Hazel Dobson and Audrey Rennison, two visionary members of the social work profession. They stand out as the unsung heroines of Australian social work, embodying the ideals, principles and values of the social work profession such as justice,

*Continued on page 11*

# Student Awards

## Barbara Kinna Award (Curtin University)

The Barbara Kinna Award was presented to Wendy Krievs. Wendy has achieved First Class Honours in Social Work, her thesis topic was *Living with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder: a family perspective*.

The Barbara Kinna Award is presented for outstanding performance throughout the course. Wendy was a member of the Vice Chancellor's List (students in the top 1% for academic achievement). The Barbara Kinna Award is presented particularly for excellence in the application of theory to practice, which Wendy ably demonstrated in her thesis.

## Margaret Stockbridge Memorial Award (University of Western Australia)

The Margaret Stockbridge Memorial Award was presented to Margaret Prentice in acknowledgement of the most outstanding academic performance whilst undertaking her degree in social work at the University of Western Australia. Margaret is presently living in New South Wales and was unable to accept the award in person. Dr Jim Ife accepted the award on Margaret's behalf and spoke of her achievements.

## Regional and Rural Social Work Student Award (Edith Cowan University Bunbury)

Sonya Mckenzie received the award on behalf of the graduating cohort of the 1998 Edith Cowan University Social Work Program, in acknowledgement of student contribution to collegial learning in social work education. These are the first students to graduate from the new social work course at Edith Cowan University. Sonya's speech at the Awards presentation is reproduced in full.

*It is appropriate and relevant that a collaboration award be given to the first graduating cohort of Bunbury ECU social work students.*

*The philosophy underpinning the social work course is about building a shared learning relationship between student and lecturer, through dialogical processes which strive towards equity, consciousness raising and empowerment. The ideals of the collaborative process are aimed towards shifting dominating power sources so that student and lecturer voices are potentially allowed opportunities to be equally heard. The struggle to integrate values, theory and practice, our personal practice models (including the lecturers' personal practice models) is at the centre of these ideals. A radical process, indeed!*

*And, one might say unrealistic in this modernist world of corporatist and efficiency ideals. But I never said that collabora*

Insert photo 1 here (Wendy Krievs)

## Wendy Krievs - Winner of Barbara Kinna Award

*tion was easy, nor free from pain. Although we shared a common learning goal, we often had competing agendas, and at times voices were not heard. Yet, as one of the students, I learnt:*

- *to be sensitive to other students in the class, balanced with an ability to act for self without harming others;*
- *to value difference as a way of working with competing needs and agendas;*
- *to be aware of the disjunctures that can occur between collaborative ideals, lived circumstances and a competitive individualistic education system; and*
- *to deeply value my own integrity as a guide to a just and productive life.*

*Thus we attempted to value the process of collaboration in our search for the attainment of justice, which we believe is the cornerstone of social work education. What has this got to do with social work practice? Everything.*

*The collaborative teaching and learning process of the last few years has shaped how many students understand their social work role within the community. While having a strong theory base to inform our practice decisions, we also carry a valuable tool which allows us to engage 'clients' (for the want of a better word) in the theory, diagnosis and action planning via the collaborative process.*

The AASW (WA Branch) congratulates Wendy, Margaret and all the ECU graduates on their outstanding achievements.

**DAPHNE CROSS**  
**VICE PRESIDENT (EDUCATION)**

Insert photo 2 here (Sonya McKenzie)

### **Sonya Mc Kenzie and Helenmary Sykes accepting the award on behalf of the 1998 cohort**

*This tool is the stepping stone into an awareness and understanding of difference and the power that rests on embracing difference. Understanding that experiences and perceptions vary from one community group, cultural group, or individual to another, as do people's ability to access and use power for social good, is a stepping stone which allows us, the social workers of the new millennium, to transcend the barriers that have traditionally separated and 'othered' the social work client within the professional relationship.*

*I am proud to have been associated with Edith Cowan University and to have shared in the collaborative journey initiated by our lecturers Debbie O'Sullivan, Susan Young, Marilyn Palmer and Dyann Ross.*

*I wish to thank my student colleagues, now my professional colleagues who have supported me during this time.*

*And a special thanks to the head of the social work program, Associate Professor Pauline Meemeduma, whose passion for social work has instilled in many of us a vision about how empowering social work practice might look.*

*I would like to conclude, by acknowledging those responsible for designing this award for a student group at ECU, Bunbury as it symbolizes for me the one moment in my degree when our collaborative efforts as a group have been formally recognised. It was no one person, but all of us who made the difference.*

*I accept this award on behalf of Jennifer Appleton, Briony Ashford, Ashley Hunt, Tracey Brown, Dianne James, Melissa Carter, Vera Hughes, Rick Berghuis, Natalie Rae, Lina Ciaverella, Helenmary Sykes, Joy Simpson, Keryl Morris, Allyson Cawthorn, Maggie Rossetta and myself. Thank you.*

### **GRACE VAUGHAN AWARD 2000**

The project sum available for use in 2000 is \$1,500. This sum may be awarded to one individual or divided between two or more individuals at the discretion of the Grace Vaughan Fund Committee. Applicants should write to

**The Registrar (Attention: Ms T N Aquino)**  
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providing full details of the sum they are seeking, the purpose for which it is intended, and the names and addresses of two referees who will forward reports to the Registrar in accordance with Regulations. Applications must include an application cover sheet, available from the Administrative Officer.

The deadline for receipt of applications is **1 September 1999**.

Applicants should also indicate whether they would be willing to accept a lesser amount than that which they are seeking. Candidates may be required to attend an interview.

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# Social Work Awards

As for the Inaugural Social Work Awards for Excellence in 1998, the winners of this year's awards demonstrated outstanding achievements.

At the awards presentation evening held on Tuesday 27th April 1999, awards were made to:

- Deborah Brill - Research Category
- Diane Fergusson-Stewart - Management Category
- Maureen Jewell - Leadership Category

Deborah works with the Office of the Public Advocate, Maureen is the Executive Director of Catholic Care and Diane is the Executive Manager Caring Services with Uniting Church Homes.

The awards show that it is possible to maintain and improve the circumstances of people in an environment where basic rights and quality of life are being rapidly eroded due to scarce resources and a focus on economic rather than human factors.

Deborah, Diane and Maureen are an inspiration to all! Congratulations!

## Deborah Brill

Deborah has conducted the first research into the issue of financial abuse of vulnerable seniors in this State. This most sensitive research was arranged in a way which was respectful of privacy and ethically sound.

While Deborah was able to undertake this project through the Office of the Public Advocate, where she is employed, it was her leadership and initiative that led to its establishment as a priority.

The research which is the subject of this award grew from a Masters Thesis on allegations of elder abuse and the finding of the thesis that the primary abuse type alleged was financial abuse. This resulted in Deborah approaching the Public Advocate seeking support to further investigate these allegations. This nomination is a fine example of a social worker undertaking research as action research related to their practice area.

The Public Advocate under the Guardianship Administration Act 1990 has a mandate to protect and promote the rights, dignity and autonomy of people with decision making disabilities and to reduce the risk of neglect, exploitation or abuse.

Insert photo 3 here  
(Deborah Brill)

Deborah Brill

A significant proportion of applications which come through the Guardianship and Administration system contain allegations of abuse perpetrated against older persons, the primary client group of the service.

The aim of the research was to determine the types of financial abuse alleged and, from this, be able to make recommendations about possible mechanisms for prevention. The research identified 111 alleged victims and found that the most common types of abuse alleged were inappropriate use of bank accounts, sale of property or assets and gifting and loaning money.

Deborah's use of the social work knowledge base and her professionalism and very high ethical standards in the conduct of the research have been acknowledged by academic and professional colleagues. The research reflects commitment to social justice and protection of vulnerable members of the community, consistent with social work values.

The focus of the research is wide ranging and it has significant potential for systemic change in that it makes recommendations for action by the government, non government and business sectors. In particular, it recommends that the banking and real estate industries look to implement processes and procedures which will be able to identify situations of abuse and be able to prevent abuse occurring.

The recommendations are contained in a report which was launched recently with the endorsement of the Minister for Seniors and the Attorney General. The recommendations are being implemented concurrently.

The outcomes of the research are highly significant to the social work profession which has an integral role in providing service in the aged care arena. Social work is often a point of contact in hospitals or as part of the aged care assessment teams when there are family concerns about abuse occurring. Through the raising of the profile of elder abuse in general, and financial abuse in particular, the research will provide social workers with an enhanced knowledge base and ways of achieving client needs better at both the individual and systemic levels.

## Diane Fergusson-Stewart

Eight years of excellent executive management in aged care is in no small part a result of the application of the principles of social work to such demanding work.

Diane Fergusson-Stewart has been a social worker for 16 years and has occupied senior general management positions since 1991 when she was appointed to the newly created position of Director Caring Services to Anglican Homes (Inc), a new position but not of a kind traditionally given to a social worker.

In 1997, she moved to Uniting Church Homes to the position

Insert photo 4 here (Diane Fergusson-Stewart)

### Diane Fergusson-Stewart

of Executive Manager Caring Services. In both organisations, her competence as a manager has led to her being appointed as Acting CEO for extended periods of time while the incumbents of the position have been away from the job.

Diane has been in a management position during a period of massive change in the area of aged care and particularly in residential aged care. The nomination provides many examples of her capacity in using social work knowledge and skills in a management role:

- to enable her to consider the social setting in which policies are delivered;
- her training in interpersonal skills and knowledge of systems theory enables her to empathise with those who are having to cope with major changes in service delivery, help them to keep in perspective what is happening, support and educate them through the changes so that they can successfully embrace them and assist those who cannot adjust to move on to work which they can manage;
- she is able to identify behaviours which hinder the organisation from achieving its goals and aims and help those carrying out such behaviours to examine what they are doing and why; and
- she has a great respect for people and treats them fairly and consistently.

In relation to organisational change and development, Diane is a clear communicator, brings her own personal gift of humour, usually transmitting important messages or requirements with a witty anecdotal fable or personal experience which assists people's understanding of what is happening and what is required of them. Written communications are direct and honest and address

change honestly, communicating the impact for people and ways in which this might be managed. Feedback from staff is that she listens to them and understands what they are saying.

She has implemented a strong teamwork approach and established teams truly representative of service providers within the organisation. A major achievement has been the establishment of a team of all care managers of Uniting Church sites as well as bringing together as a team nursing home and hostel managers in their own region.

Di brings a problem solving approach to team work which encourages members as a team to own problems and develop team solutions to them. This approach has been used with resident delegates, facilitating a more positive approach by them and enabling them to realise that they can seek some redress to their concerns. Skills as a negotiator and in the development of networks, valuing everyone in the network, are integral to Di's work as a manager. This is one of her trademarks.

In her work in both organisations Di has clearly articulated the mission for the organisation, maintaining staff awareness of the client group and the "raison d'être" for the staff. This focuses on maximising the independence and enjoyment of life for elderly people through the provision and support of quality care and associated services. The ability to keep this focus is a real strength.

Di demonstrates tenacity and perseverance, dealing with tough situations, people and issues in an environment where there has been a long history of resistance to change.

An important aspect of management is leadership, particularly in relation to organisational change and development. In addition to her work within the organisation, at the macro level Di has been a member of the Board of Management of Aged Care Western Australia for six years, this Board feeding in to the national parent body which is a major player in challenging the Commonwealth government on aged care policies. She puts in time and energy to respond to Commonwealth initiatives and is often relied upon by her CEO as an up to date resource on these.

A recent acknowledgement of her contribution at the macro level has been an invitation by the Department of Health and Aged Care to become a member of the Aged Care Planning Advisory Committee, a Ministerial appointment to a Committee which advises the Minister about allocation of residential and community care places within Western Australia. Another invitation recently issued to Di was to participate in a forum of key players in aged care, an Australia-wide forum to take place in Canberra.

In keeping with her firm adherence to her social work base, Di has always evaluated what is happening in her organisation and has undertaken research in each of her employment settings since her first appointment at Mount Henry Hospital. This is also evidenced in her willingness and ability to assess her strengths and weaknesses and undertake professional development.

She is currently undertaking an external Master of Commerce degree through Deakin University to redress gaps in her knowledge of financial management at senior level.

Last year, she completed a Graduate Certificate in management competence through Deakin University and achieved the status of Australia Competent Manager. She is also an Associate Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management.

Di is a manager who continues to learn and to grow. Those who she manages may rely on her never to take refuge in past experience and fail to change with the times.

## Maureen Jewell

Maureen has shown exceptional leadership in the field of disability, particularly intellectual disability, over many years. In recent years, as the Executive Director of a non government agency, she has helped shape policy and practice within the agency and in the wider sector, while maintaining the ethics and values of the social work profession.

Maureen initially worked as a Social Work Supervisor and Senior Social Worker at the Authority for Intellectually Handicapped persons (AIH), now the Disability Services Commission (DSC). From 1987 to 1999 as the Executive Director of Catholic Care, she has helped steer the organisation to become one of the major non government agencies in the field of intellectual disability. She has also had considerable involvement in a range of professional and community organisations as follows:

- Director (and member of the Executive Committee) National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID) 1993-1995;
- President, Development Disability Council of WA, 1993-1996,
- Commissioner, Catholic Community Care Commission, 1988-1993;

Insert photo 5 here  
(Maureen Jewell)

Maureen Jewell

- Chairperson, Policy Committee, Catholic Community Care Commission, 1990-1991, and
- Chairperson Accommodation Standing Committee, Advisory Council for Disability Services, 1995-1998.

She has also been a member of several other related committees.

All of the above positions have been either elected or appointed, some by the Minister for Disability Services, demonstrating acknowledgement by others in and outside of that field for her leadership capacity.

Maureen has always maintained a primary commitment to the clients and their families in her work, particularly in negotiating with government, demonstrating clear articulation of goals, consistent with social work values and ethics. There has been considerable pressure on her to compromise values and goals that she upholds but she has maintained them over many years, sometimes at considerable personal cost.

As the Executive Director of Catholic Care, Maureen has led the agency in clearly articulating its philosophy, values and ethics to a high standard. The organisation presented a workshop on the development process under way in the organisation at the 1997 State Conference of the AASW (WA Branch) and this was later recognised by the Branch under the Annual Sponsorship of a Community Organisation policy.

Maureen has carried these ethics and values in her negotiations with funding bodies on behalf of the agency and of the non government sector. These have been particularly evident in a climate of privatisation and decision making based largely on an economic rationalist approach.

She has seen the necessity for resources, evidenced in her successful bid this year for funding for three homes for children with very high support needs. Over a number of years she has obtained funding for twenty such homes.

She has been at the forefront of developing not only resources but maintaining the quality of service and quality of life for clients i.e. not just a roof over their head. This focus includes family involvement in decision making, the development of a complaints or grievance mechanism and the retention of a strong family counselling and pastoral care service.

Her vision and goals for Catholic Care have seen it grow from a low budget organisation with one or two staff and a number of volunteers to a significant agency with a budget of approximately \$7m, 120 staff and 60 volunteers. She is widely renowned for her expertise in the area of competitive tendering and for her commitment to a just tendering process.

The "Welcome Home" campaign and the "Time to Care" campaign (Australia wide) were initiated by a small group which included Maureen. As the President of the Development Disability Council of WA (DDCWA) at the time, she led what was a very significant public campaign, the results of which have seen a turn around in government policy and brought massive change in

funding of the whole area of disability by government in WA. In both campaigns, through her involvement she provided direction and support for others.

Maureen provides a role model of social work excellence for colleagues and others.

## Background to Awards

The Social Work Awards for Excellence are intended to reward consistently high standards of performance as well as individual or specific examples of meritorious performance.

The award categories cover a number of aspects of social work practice, irrespective of the context in which the individual is working. They focus on the competencies and qualities demonstrated by the social worker in terms of professional standards, values and ethics, as well as the outcomes achieved.

It is hoped that the achievements of this year's award winners will provide encouragement to others working in difficult and challenging times.

Thanks go to the awards panel members - Dawn Mielen, Barbara Meddin, Roma Lewi and Vere Berger - also to Daphne Cross, Pattie Benjamin and Liz Retamal for their assistance with the organisation of the awards and to Brian Wooller as Chair for the evening and presenter of the awards.

Thanks too, to Vere Berger for her work on the preparation of the citations. Special thanks to the nominators for their excellent nominations and to the nominees whose responses reflected the excellence of their achievements.

## VIRGINIA SCOTT

### VICE PRESIDENT (ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE)

*Continued from page 5*

equal respect of persons, fairness and equity, especially for the disadvantaged and powerless sectors of the community.

Dobson, the bold activist and social reformer and Rennison the visionary academic must surely stand out as role models and be beacons of inspiration for future generations of Australian social workers.

They signify in their own ways, the vital significance of social action and social reform in any model of social work; and training programs need to highlight the interplay between policy and practice and equip students with the necessary skills to incorporate social action, social change and social reform into the armory of social work practice.

In the words of one of the leaders of the third generation of social work educators in Australia, Jim Barber<sup>4</sup> of Flinders, social work must always be 'focussed on the development of political awareness and on the willingness to struggle for change (p127).

## References

1. Ann-Marie Jordan (1997) *Aliens and Citizens*. Allen & Unwin.
2. Rennison is the author of *Man on his Own*, an influential social work text in the early days of Australian social work education.
3. See K. Rivett (ed.) (1975) *Australia and the Non-White Migrant*. Melbourne University Press.
4. J.G. Barber (1991) *Beyond Casework*. Macmillan.

*Professor Jayasuriya's story of two pioneer social workers and the role they played in Australian social reform and social change rang bells again when we heard of the work and achievements of our award winners.*

*Thank you Laki for joining us and sharing these reflections with us. Congratulations, too, on the acknowledgement of your own contribution.*



# Centrelink - 12 Months On

It is now over twelve months since Centrelink was officially launched and we have had time to reflect on where we've been and where we're headed. For all of us, it has been a year of significant change. We have created a new organisation, a new culture, new payments and services and new ways of doing business.

All Customer Service Centres have embraced the service by appointment system and point of contact decision making. This has had a real impact on improving the speed and efficiency of service to our customers.

Over 8,000 customers across the country have been surveyed and some consistent themes have emerged: customers want to be treated as individuals, they prefer to deal with one person, they don't want to tell their story over and over again. Centrelink's response has been the implementation of the 'one main contact' model. In this model one staff member is assigned to manage customer contact from beginning to end rather than the customer having to deal with several staff before finalisation of their claim.

Under the new arrangements, customers will be introduced to their Main Customer Service Officer who'll deal with them on an ongoing basis on all major issues such as interviews and assessments. Simple matters such as change of address, will continue to be dealt with by phoning Centrelink Call Centres or talking to reception staff.

Centrelink is further exploring the enhancement of this innovative way of doing business by combining ongoing contact with a single staff member with services being tailored to suit particular life events a customer is experiencing.

A 'life event' means any significant life change, such as arriving in Australia as an immigrant, leaving school, becoming responsible for children, seeking work or education, changing partner status or planning retirement.

Social workers will offer support and training for Customer Service Officers in the transition to the One Main Contact role. This will include formal skills training and ongoing consultation on the handling of customer situations, the setting of appropriate boundaries with customers and the development of more comprehensive knowledge of internal and external resources.

The social work team will also be involved in a number of interesting projects including a Drug Management Strategy, Domestic Violence Consultations and the establishment of a Social Work Reference Group.

The purpose of the Drug Management Strategy is to determine the extent of the "illicit" drug problem as it impacts on staff, our service delivery arrangements and the broader community in which this activity is taking place. The intention is to draw up a set of recommendations which will put in place a comprehensive strategy for Centrelink to work with other key local communities to assist in finding better solutions to this problem. As part of this

the first staff focus group was held in Sydney and Melbourne recently and further consultations will be held in other localities at later dates.

The Domestic and Family Violence consultations have been completed and a draft report presented for consideration. Consultations were held in various locations including Perth and Bunbury to identify areas where Centrelink can improve its service to people who are the victims of violence, to develop new ways of working together with other service providers and to provide policy feedback to client departments.

The first meeting of the Social Work Reference Group was held in March. This is a broad mix of academic, corporate and non-government sectors in the social welfare field and brought some valuable perspectives to the discussions. All external participants were keenly interested in understanding the role of social work and the broader directions of Centrelink and then looking at the contribution they could make.

Finally, Centrelink social workers were recently involved in providing support services to victims of the Moora floods and Cyclone Vance. Staff worked long hours, often in difficult conditions, but they were able to provide exceptional service to individuals and their families. Congratulations were received from other agencies who were impressed by the professionalism and commitment of Centrelink staff.

As the Centrelink social work service moves into the future our challenge is to use new technologies to personalise service, expand choice, increase convenience and support accurate decision making. The partnership between Centrelink, related government departments and the community is growing quickly. We encourage your feedback as we continue to create an innovative, flexible and responsive government agency.

You can give us feedback on our service by ringing our Customer Relations Line on 1800 050 004 or by visiting our web site at <http://www.centrelink.gov.au>

## New Members

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

Olivia Ballantyne (Student Associate)  
Kelly Anne Charles  
Beatrice MacFarlane  
Clare Murphy  
James Parish (Student Associate)  
Deepika Sarmah  
Anna Simpson  
Lorraine Stephen (Student Associate)  
Sharon Thomas (Student Associate)  
Mary Wells (Princess Margaret Hospital)

## CPE Events

A half day interactive workshop on women's legal issues to be facilitated by Cecily Montgomery, Education Policy and Development Officer, Women's Legal Services Inc WA.

The workshop is tentatively scheduled for the 21st July and will include:

- background on the Women's Legal Service
- history and philosophy
- structure - including management, membership and staff
- funding
- service guidelines, priorities and procedures
- case study examples outlining WLSWA responses to client needs.

Further details and information will be circulated with the July edition of the newsletter.

Rural Social Workers Action Group presents the

### 4TH RURAL PRACTICE CONFERENCE

15th - 16th July 1999

University of Ballarat, Victoria

#### 'Rural practice: A Celebration'

##### Keynote speakers:

Frank McClelland, Director of Office of Rural Affairs, Department of Natural Resources

Professor Jan Fook, Deakin University

For all enquiries or to register your interest, please contact

**Rosemary Green or Irene Keating**

Tel: (03) 5327 9610, Fax: (03) 5327 9840,

Email: [r.green@ballarat.edu.au](mailto:r.green@ballarat.edu.au)

## Australia Day Address by Phoebe Fraser

*The 1999 Australia Day Address was delivered on 21 January 1999 by Phoebe Fraser. Phoebe has spent time in providing international aid in war torn and famine stricken countries, such as Rwanda, Somalia, Bosnia and Bangladesh. She is a member of National Council for Century of Federation. The text of her full address is available from the Australia Day home page <http://www.austdayaddress.ozemail.com.au/broadcast.html>.*

Australia Day is many things for many people. But one of the things it is to all of us is a time for reflection and anticipation.

This Australia day we can be proud that we have one of the highest standards of living in the world by almost any measure. We have, despite some notable exceptions, a tolerant society, captivated by our cultural wealth and diversity. We have an economy that has, to date, withstood the ravages of the Asian collapse, and we have a people known around the world for their sense of humour, friendliness, and fairness.

We can celebrate our society, which finally acknowledges not only the need, but also the desirability of reconciliation and settlement with the original owners of this vast land. We can give thanks to a strong environmental movement, which is a loud and necessary check on the proponents of economic development at any cost.

And although it would be wrong to paint a glowing picture of Australia without acknowledging those doing it hard, the disadvantaged and dispossessed, overall there is no doubt that as we stand on the brink

of the millennium, and on the eve of the centenary of Australia's federation, we can be proud of our often remarkable achievements, our development and our growth.

On Australia Day, although the tendency is to think of Australia at home, I want to talk about Australia abroad. Global realities force us onto the international scene. Increased access to information and communication and the ease of international travel combined with the interdependence of international security, economic and environmental concerns all turn global realities into local realities.

Necessity forces us out into the world, but some people still advocate a locking of the metaphorical door, a 'we're right mate' mentality which would have us withdraw from the international arena, reduce or refuse immigration, and live our lives out, down here at the bottom of the world, in our blissful island haven of relative wealth and prosperity. On the other hand we have much to offer and much to learn. Without active engagement Australia risks being left behind. Not only that in reality, without active international participation, our island haven could be ruined.

Why would Australia be ruined? As long as 80% of the world's population live in abject poverty we can expect to see continued suffering of and on the earth. High in the hills of Vietnam, villagers are eking a living out of the receding forests, the degradation of their environment is also the degradation of our environment.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO ATTEND THE STATE CONFERENCE FREE?

If you would like to attend this year's State Conference and you are a remote practitioner, the AASW (WA Branch) might have an offer you can't refuse.

As part of its support to remote practitioners to help them comply with the Association's CPE requirements, the Branch will support a member of the AASW who is a remote practitioner to attend this year's State Conference.

The conference will be held in Perth 16 - 18 August 1999 at the Novotel Langley Hotel. As you would have seen in the program, this year's conference promises to be a very important and worth while event.

In order to be considered, an applicant must be:

- a member of the WA Branch of the AASW
- work in a remote setting
- would otherwise be unable to attend the conference.

Applicants who wish to be considered should provide a short submission to the selection committee of no longer than 2 pages outlining how attendance at the conference would benefit themselves, their clients and their agency. It should also include a strategy of how they would disseminate the information acquired at the conference to their region or community when they return from the conference.

The person selected will have their conference registration paid including the conference dinner and receive a return economy class air fare to Perth. The person will be billeted with an AASW member in Perth during their stay. Transport to and from the airport and assistance to get to the conference venue will be provided.

Submissions should be sent to:

**Dr. Barbara Meddin**  
**Selection Committee**  
**AASW (WA Branch)**  
**PO Box 198 West Perth 6872**  
**or Fax to (08) 9444 5410**  
**no later than**  
**Friday, 25th June 1999**

The state Conference, as an AASW sponsored activity, accrues double CPE points.

It is commonly recognised that extensive logging in the Amazon, often considered to be the lung of the modern world, has the potential to affect weather patterns and therefore the environment throughout the world. And yet while the industrialised nations have built their wealth on the back of their own environments we are saying to poorer nations 'it is time to stop'.

Australia has been redefining the balance between economic development and environmental protection. Whether we have reached an optimum situation or not, is still hotly debated. The fact is, however, that we have recognised the intrinsic value of the environment, not only for its beauty and complex ecology, but also in terms of economics, and most importantly in terms of the survival of us all.

In developing countries where often resources are limited, it is difficult to ask communities to set aside a resource for posterity when there is no other source of wealth or income. Australia must continue to play a strong role in assisting developing countries to look at the development of alternative sources of income for their countries and their people, otherwise we can expect continued deforestation, environmental degradation and resulting global climatic chaos.

In Malawi a child is orphaned by the AIDS virus. It is expected that by the year 2020 there will be 40 million AIDS orphans around the world. In Malawi, by that time, it has been predicted that life expectancy will be just 29 years of age because of the virus. The social strain, upheaval and instability of those countries heavily afflicted with the virus will have global ramifications in the future. This is not only an African problem. While on the decline in Australia the incidence of HIV is also on the increase in Asia whose incidence graph is just 10 years behind Africa.

Before the Asian markets collapsed, some demographers and economists were predicting that the AIDS virus would reduce Thailand's economic growth by as much as 20% due to lost productivity. HIV/AIDS is one major health issue affecting the world today; there are many others, which have a direct bearing on Australia's health and economic well being.

Australia has been at the forefront of scientific discovery. Howard Florey's discovery of penicillin must be one of the greatest turning points of this century. Recent breakthroughs in the development of an AIDS vaccine equal Florey's work in terms of global significance. Another remarkable and valuable Australian achievement.

Environmental and health problems worldwide affect everyone on the whole planet. Australia has a real capacity to make a significant contribution to their resolution. For political and economic reasons we should also be involved.

Many international and Indonesian commentators have said that Indonesia has nowhere to go but up, and yet 116 million people are now living below the poverty line and have no food security. The situation could deteriorate much further. Political and economic instability in that country presents security risks through the region.

In this deregulated, globalised world the movements of capital are quick, they are often sudden and unpredictable. We have seen the impact of that movement in the rise and more particularly the decline of the Tiger economies.

Australia is inextricably entwined in the global economy and politics. This again provides a powerful reason for full involvement to work for a better and more stable system.

As a nation we are in a unique position. The modern Australian commonwealth is young, and despite some very real concerns at home, internationally we are not seen to carry too much political baggage. We

are not, generally, seen to be colonial power (except perhaps by our nearest neighbours in Papua New Guinea). We are not big enough to be an economic threat. We are not a political threat. We have a stable and enduring democratic system respecting the rule of law, a strong economy, and a welfare state. We are not seen to be too closely linked to the major powers.

One of the greatest threats to mankind in the 21st century will be poverty. Poverty destroys the environment, and threatens global health and security. Poverty anywhere threatens our way of life. If we are not prepared to invest in the eradication of poverty for humanitarian purposes, then we should do it to protect our environment, our health, our security. Call it enlightened self interest. The motivation is not important the end result will be. Many are sceptical about poverty alleviation programmes and the effectiveness of foreign aid. But since the end of World War II international foreign aid has helped to:

- more than double average real incomes in the developing world;
- halve infant and child mortality rates;
- increase average life expectancy by 33 per cent although the AIDS epidemic is devastating progress made in this area; and
- increase the proportion of children in the developing world starting school from less than 50 per cent to more than 75 per cent (even as the population has doubled).

These are real figures, and real achievements. It is daunting to think what might be possible if greater political will was present. Over the last few months we have seen on our televisions progress in the construction of an international space station. Many of you might be able to remember the day when walking on the moon was considered a dream. It is now a simple reality. It is time we take the mental 'giant step for mankind' in our thinking about the alleviation and eradication of poverty. It too could become a reality.

Australia is in a unique position to gather like minded nations together to work for the eradication of poverty and in so doing confront the global problems of overpopulation, environmental degradation and political instability. Indonesia is a particular case in point. Australia has played a remarkable role in Indonesia since the crisis. But now it is time to garner international support to ensure food security to those 116 million people who have fallen below the poverty line.

While there is much for Australia to contribute in making a better world there are also lessons we can learn from that world. Aid workers have some unique experiences and insights some of which can be related back to contemporary Australia.

In Vietnam in 1990 before the trade embargo was lifted and while North Vietnam remained much the same as it had been for years: poor and underdeveloped. CARE Australia had begun working there particularly with the typhoon struck people of Dong Hoi, the capital of a region so hot that it is known as the frying pan.

We were afraid to talk about the War, and about the experiences of the people there, and yet reminders of it constantly confronted us. In Dong Hoi much of the land is so compacted from bombing raids in the war that it is still impossible to farm. The people themselves talked freely and openly about their experiences, their losses, and their pain.

I marvelled at their strength, their resilience, their honesty, and at their capacity to cope. And it was not that they ignored realities, or hid the truth. It was not that they did not seek justice. But that they recognised that without dealing with the past with honesty without blame, justice free of guilt, fairness not resentment, there would be no moving forward.

Nobody could fail to be greatly influenced by the attitudes and philosophy adopted by the people of Dong Hoi. They understood it was not possible to change the past although one might regret it. They understood that the past has to be faced with honesty, that they had to learn from it to assist their advance into the future. It is a line of thought that can be directly applied to one of the greatest challenges facing Australia at this time that of reconciliation with our indigenous people.

On this Australia Day I rejoice to see that we are finally beginning to face our past with honesty, justice, and fairness. That movement towards reconciliation with the first inhabitants of this great land is being made. Without it Australia will never be able to move forward as a strong, just and united society. Reconciliation is the cornerstone to our future as a prosperous egalitarian society, which holds freedom, justice, and a fair go for all to be its pillars.

I do not believe that it is an exaggeration to say that if reconciliation fails many of our ideas about what Australia is and could be will be destroyed. The success or failure of reconciliation will not only be at the political level, but will lie in the community, and with each of us as individuals. It is not just a process for 'someone else' to complete on our behalf. Reconciliation must, by its very nature, involve each of us. There are detractors. There are people who would hijack the process for their own ends. Let both sides be prepared to compromise, to reach a point where we can find truth, where we can face truth, and like the Vietnamese, where we can cope with it, and then we can move forward together.

The first experience I had of a true development project was in Bangladesh. The project was a complex one involving literacy, nutritional and public health education, and revolving community loan schemes. All the women involved in the project, and there were over 2000 of them, were required to buy exercise books for their literacy classes. They paid CARE two rupees which was nothing like the value of the exercise book but significant enough in their impoverished existence to give them a sense of ownership and pride. They had made an investment and as a result they were going to make the most of it.

Revolving community loans, designed around the Grameen Bank model, were set with competitive market level interest rates. There was no charity, only opportunity, no welfare or maintenance of life, but a leg up, a change to break the cycle of poverty and despair. On that trip to Bangladesh issues around aid dependency and techniques to avoid it were pivotal. Maximising life's potential was the key.

Returning home, it is possible to propose that what we call aid dependency in development speak could be called welfare dependency in Australia. It is also notable that the checks and balances aid programmes around the world have created to prevent such dependency do not appear to exist in modern industrialised welfare states. We have created in our own countries what we refused to create in the third world (after some notably bad experiences in the 1950s and 60s where aid dependency was correctly identified as being economically unsustainable). We have created for ourselves a rod for our backs, a system that does not give a leg up, hope and optimism, but barely maintains life.

While looking at the issue of welfare and the dispossessed I would like to touch on the predicament of our indigenous community. There is a common perception that money is thrown at aboriginal problems. On closer analysis we are coming to understand that this is not so, that in relation to the real need of aboriginal communities much greater funds need to be spent. It is shameful that many begrudge this group tax payer dollars to alleviate their conditions. It must be a national goal to equalise the quality of life and standard of living of this, and all communities in Australia no matter what it costs.

Assistance must also be appropriate. In Namibia, the World Bank initiated a cattle raising project with some of the more isolated tribal

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groups. There was widespread community participation. Agreements had been made regarding the sale of beef to the European Union. The Namibian people with whom the World Bank was working were traditional cattle herders, they were excited by and committed to the project. Great success was expected.

Herds were delivered, breeding began and the herds began to grow and grow...and grow... There was one vital factor that had not been taken into consideration in the project design. Namibian tribes people measure their wealth by the size of their herd. Important social transactions, such as marriage, are paid for by head of cattle. The World Bank and the Namibian government found that the cattle were not being sold - the result - water shortages and desertification, as gross overstocking was the project outcome.

The project was perfect in all its aspects save one, the most important, it failed to take into account the fundamental cultural and spiritual life of the people with whom it was working. Is it possible that we, too, are a little guilty of this with respect to the indigenous people of Australia?

So having reflected, a little, about where we've been and where we're going, to me it is clear that we have much untapped potential as individuals and as a nation. We have so much to offer and we should offer it - who are we not to? We must aim to empower everyone to reach their full potential.

Although it may seem that isolation and non-involvement is an option, environment, health, financial, trade and security concerns are all globalised. Therefore there is no real choice. Whether we like it or not

we are going to be dramatically influenced by the world. If we believe Australia's values and ideals are worth preserving then active participation and positive contribution in the international arena is the only way forward.

Recently I had a conversation about our future. Much of what I have said today was discussed, but particularly the issue of Australia's potential to be great, and to make an even greater contribution than we have to date. My colleague's response was "But why would we want to? Can't we be content as we are?" I'd like to answer him now with the words of Nelson Mandela.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves 'Who am I to be brilliant?' Actually, who are you not to be? ... Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us, it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

Each of us has the potential to find something special within us to contribute to our family and friends. Some have special talents to offer to the nation and the world. Australia should grasp the light and run, we are perfectly poised to make a truly great contribution during the next century.

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