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THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

President's Report

"Times they are a changing" and there is no question but that they are changing for the WA Branch. By the time you get this newsletter this year's 19th Annual State Conference will be well on its way. No doubt you will realise the changed format for this year as we pilot our first ever regional component of the State Conference. Thanks to Rosina Pruiti, convenor of this year's Conference and Anne Holloway, Chair of the regional component of the Conference and the committees in Perth and Bunbury for all their hard work.

I'm sure that by the time you are reading this we'll all be just about ready to say job well done to the Committees and the indomitable Marian Maughan, State Conference Project Officer. Without the creative energies of the Committee and all the hard organisational work on Marian's part, the Conference couldn't happen. Thanks also to our principal sponsors, Family and Children's Services and Centrelink.

Several other major changes are on the horizon for the Branch. This year's AGM sees the completion of the terms of four members of the Committee of Management who have chosen not to renominate. They are Virginia Scott, Daphne Cross, Richard Wilkins and Roxanne Garven. The contributions they have made are both innumerable and immense.

Virginia as Vice President, Ethics and Professional Practice, has shown leadership to the Branch with a range of initiatives. A very important contribution of Virginia's was the development of the Social Work Awards for Excellence program to recognise outstanding contributions by members to the social work profession in WA. Now in its fourth year, the awards are recognised as a premier event.

Daphne Cross a long time member of the Committee of Management has played a significant role in continuing professional education over the years as both Vice President for Education in 1999 and convenor of the State Conference in both 1997 and 1998.

Richard Wilkins has been a part of the Committee of Management since he was student representative for Curtin School of Social Work. His energy to student issues and to the New Graduates Committee has played an important role for the WA Branch. Roxanne Garven was seconded to the Committee of Management last year and the Branch appreciates her input to the Committee's work.

There is indeed a season for everything and you will notice an ad in this newsletter that tells us that a very important season for the Branch is drawing to a close. The WA Branch has been fortunate enough to have the outstanding services of Liz Retamal for the past 12

ATTENTION MEMBERS

Enclosed with the newsletter is a nomination form for the Branch's Social Work Awards for Excellence.

Details of CPE events are also enclosed. In this issue members will also find an advertisement for the position of Executive Officer for the WA Branch.

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

years, first as membership officer and then as Branch Executive Officer. Liz is the repository of Branch history, knowledge and functioning. In her tenure the Branch has grown both in size and in service to members. Her role in that growth and development has been significant.

Liz has worked with five Branch presidents during her tenure as Executive Officer. I'm sure I speak for everyone of them when I say how fortunate I have been to be able to work with Liz. It is with deep regret that I announce that Liz has decided to retire from the Branch Executive Officer position and get a real social work job. I must challenge Liz to say that she has carried out her position with the Branch as a real social worker, with ethics, integrity and outstanding competency. We will miss her terribly when she leaves us in December.

What more can I say than that while change may bring sadness with it, it also brings opportunities. With the changes I've spoken about you can see that there are opportunities - opportunities for members to get involved by nominating at the AGM for the vacancies that now exist on the COM or by applying for the Executive Officer position. I urge you to be one of the social workers who makes a difference and consider joining with your colleagues to further our profession and the work of the Branch.

BARBARA MEDDIN

BEHIND THE SMILES

A group of Perth women today recently launched a book at the Art Gallery of WA to help others like themselves overcome abusive relationships and regain control of their lives.

Funded by The Feilman Foundation, Family and Community Services and Perth counselling organisation, Centrecare, the book, titled: "Behind the Smiles", is a collection of stories, poetry and artwork that reflect the women's struggles during their journeys toward personal freedom.

The idea of producing a book was first conceptualised in early 1999 by the women who were then attending a Centrecare support group for women involved in relationships with someone who is violent or abusive. The group started to write poetry, produce artwork and tell their stories in ways that expressed their inner most feelings, said Ms Herberte, Centrecare Counsellor and bookgroup facilitator.

They found the process to be very helpful because they were able to express and deal with deeper feelings through the use of art and creativity. This was a different way of communicating their stories and reflecting on the abuse.

Ms Herberte said she felt very privileged to listen to the women's stories and the women discovered there was great value in talking about their lives and sharing their writings and artwork with others. It was then that the women decided to share their stories with a wider audience by publishing a book which would provide other women with the necessary insight, hope and courage to start altering and changing their lives and making a difference.

Ms Herberte would see approximately five clients daily whose lives are affected by abuse. She said many women who attend counselling are unaware that they are involved in relationships in which there is abuse and violence and the impact this has on their lives.

They think there is something wrong with them, said Ms Herberte. *They put it down to such things as depression, unhappiness or guilt. Some even wonder if they're going crazy. They do not know who they can talk to or trust and believe no one else could possibly be experiencing anything similar to what they are going through. They are also unaware that abuse is not just about physical violence. It can also be coercion and threats, intimidation, financial, emotional, verbal and sexual abuse. It can also be intergenerational, with mothers often being abused by their children.*

Statistics show that it costs more than \$1 million per annum in Western Australia to assist 20 victims of domestic violence. This includes the cost of policing, hospital and other medical services (38.5% of all costs), court services, counselling, social security payments, housing and potential loss of income. And a recent survey indicated that over a 12-month period, only 19 per cent of women who were physically assaulted and 15 per cent of women who were sexually assaulted actually reported the incidence to the police.

Ms Herberte said in light of the above, the women agreed that all women should be given the opportunity to regain control over their lives and to once again enjoy harmonious relationships with husbands, new partners and family members. And placement of the book in public libraries and bookstores would help this to take place.

Ms Herberte said once the book was published, the women saw their lives from a totally different perspective and it validated their stories of abuse in yet another way. *The process has enabled them to bloom into confident and assertive women who have embraced their lives and who now feel in control of their destinies,* she said. *They are proud of their achievements. They have created something tangible that can be shared with others. The book is now a very real part of their lives.*

Ms Herberte said although the group has now disbanded, all the women have moved on to other great endeavours, such as full-time education, volunteer work and paid employment. They were



Linking Australian Government Services

**Centrelink is proud to be a
Principal Sponsor of
the 19th Australian Association
of
Social Workers (WA Branch)
State Conference**

Best wishes to all delegates

NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

Celine Coyne (Student Associate)
Richard Lewandowski
Michelle Maclean (Family and Children's Services)
Sharon McAuliffe (Student Associate)
Amanda Whelan (Goldfields Centrecare)

also enjoying more solid and satisfying relationships with their husbands and/or new partners and other family members. *Behind the Smiles* is available from local and regional libraries, selected Dymocks bookstores and by contacting Centrecare on 9325 6644. Cost is \$16.50 GST inclusive.

More information

Jacinta Goerke, Centrecare, Tel: 9325 6644 0412 338813
email:jacintag@centrecare.com.au
Suzie Herbert, Centrecare, Tel: 9325 6644
email:suzieh@centrecare.com.au

JOB OPPORTUNITY WA BRANCH EXECUTIVE OFFICER

- Are you an organised person?
- Do you like working in a social work environment?
- Have good people skills?

If so, this position may be for you!!!

The WA Branch is seeking applications for the position of Branch Executive Officer. Duties include providing administrative and clerical support to the Branch and its sub-committees; providing executive assistance to the President and Committee of Management; and is responsible for financial recordkeeping for the Branch. A primary responsibility for the position is responding to enquiries received by the Branch concerning the Association and the work of the WA Branch. Providing project support to the Branch's CPE committee may also be a responsibility of the position.

The Branch is looking for someone with good interpersonal skills along with the ability to work independently. Computer literacy and general administrative, financial and clerical skills are essential. An understanding of the social work profession and knowledge of the AASW would enhance one's ability to take on the job.

The position is for 20 to 25 hours a week. Salary negotiable.

For job description and selection criteria contact Liz Retamal on 9443 2934. For more information contact Dr. Barbara Meddin, Branch President on 9350 7221. Applications close on **Friday, September 29, 2000**. Applicants must address the selection criteria, include a copy of their resume and provide the names of three referees.

PILBARA/KIMBERLEY SOCIAL WORKERS

DO YOU WANT TO HEAR

About the development of the Pilbara/Kimberley Subcommittee of the AASW (WA Branch)?

The latest on Continuing Professional Education? Feedback on the recent AASW (WA) State Conference?

Dr Barbara Meddin, Branch President, will be in Broome on *23rd September 2000*.

The Subcommittee plans to take this opportunity to get together with social workers in the region to discuss remote practice issues such as access to supervision and training, isolation and support. A workshop on ethical decision making is also planned. (Attendance at the ethics workshop accrues AASW CPE points).

Time and venue to be announced. For more information or to register your interest contact.

Lanie Pianta on 08 9144 1111
email: lanie.pianta@health.wa.gov.au
Luke Hays on 08 9185 0200

BUMPER STICKERS

Enclosed with your newsletter is a bumper sticker — this comes with compliments from the South West Regional Subcommittee of the WA Branch. The bumper stickers were an initiative of the South West Regional Subcommittee with the aim of promoting social work in local communities. Special thanks to Lina Ciavarella for her work on this project.

SOCIAL WORK AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 2001

EARLY BIRD NOTICE

Now it's not quite that time of the year again but we want you to put your thinking caps on as to who you may choose to nominate for next year. Do you:

- ◆ Want to nominate someone but wonder where to start?
- ◆ Wonder whether you have enough time to write and research a colleague's contribution to social work?
- ◆ Wonder how much to write?

If the answer is yes to any of these:

Help is at hand. This newsletter contains a slightly altered nomination form which should make the process easier. Guidelines for nominating will be available soon.

Watch this space!



PARENTING INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE WORKING WITH CHILDREN

As a person working with children, you'll already know that so-called problems with children can often be solved with the right information. But where can you find the facts easily and quickly without ploughing through piles of textbooks?

At our local parenting information centre there's a wealth of information and the people to help you find it.

To find out where your nearest parenting information centre is located call the Parenting Line on (08) 9272 1466 or 1800 654 432 (free for STD callers).



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