



# THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

## President's Report

Once again it is with mixed emotions that I write this president's report. Those emotions stem from that time that we've been talking about for several months now actually happening - that is Liz Retamal leaving the Branch as Executive Officer.

While the positive side of the emotions I am experiencing relates to knowing that Liz is moving on to the next phase of her professional career, the down side of that both for me and for the Branch is that we'll no longer have a Liz to rely on! Liz, I don't know how I, or the Branch, could have made it without your help and support. On behalf of the Committee of Management and the Branch, I wish you well in where ever your new interests take you. We'll miss you!

Perhaps I'll spend a bit of time now catching up with happenings at the National level. Prior to the Board of Director's meeting in November, a two day strategic planning meeting was held. The key Strategic "Emphases" identified at the workshop were:

### Relationships and information

- Information flow
- Access and Equity of services for members
- Enabling partnerships between Branches and National
- Finances
- Finding the right formula for funding
- Ensuring viability
- Conservative fiscal planning

### Organisation and structure

- A continuing investigation of the structure and governance of AASW for both national governance and implementation of the Code of Ethics

### Practice standards

Increasing the value and credibility of social work practice

### Education

- CPE
- Assessment of Overseas Social Workers

### Opinion leadership

- Social policy, with special emphasis given to reconciliation.

Another important happening at that time was a meeting with the AASW's insurer, AON. You will find inserted in this newsletter information from them concerning the liability and indemnity insurance provided by the Association.

Other significant outcomes of the Board meeting relate to acknowledgement by the Board that surpluses raised by an individual Branch remain that Branch's surplus. There was also a motion passed that reaffirmed a Branch's option to continue to have a Branch newsletter should the Association develop a National newsletter. Both of these are important decisions to the WA Branch which works hard to raise funds in addition to the capitation it receives.

These funds are used to provide a wide range of services and activities to members of the Branch which otherwise wouldn't be possible. There is also significant interest in and benefit to members as a result of having a WA Branch newsletter and thus I was pleased to have reaffirmed that Branches can retain the option of having their own newsletter if they so choose.

Another significant topic of discussion at the Board meeting was the Association's finances. Once the decision is taken on these matters and when the decision is no longer covered by standing orders, I will be conveying to Branch members the outcome of these discussions. The decision will no doubt have significant impact on Branches and on the Association as a whole.

One outcome of the Board meeting that was disappointing for WA was the fact that a proposal put to the Board to use WA surplus funds to pilot appointing a social policy officer was not carried. Given that finances are an issue for the Association at the moment, the motion to allow WA to use its surpluses in this financial year to hire a social policy officer was defeated. However, the Board noted that the proposal was an important one both to the Association and the Branch and it seems that there is the likelihood that

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

next year Branches will be able to access their surpluses. The freeze on spending Branch surpluses at this time relates to the motion passed at the June 2000 Board meeting preventing Branches from spending their surpluses during this current financial year.

At the Board meeting directors were informed that there would be a tour of Branches by the President of the IFSW, Imelda Dodds and by our National President, Jo Gaha. They have offered to do a CPE workshop on International Social Work and perhaps a forum for members. I floated the idea that these might be held in Perth and perhaps in a regional area. Plans are yet to be finalised but I'll keep you posted on this important event.

The marketing of CPE at the national level is commencing with correspondence to major employers in each state. The Branch provided revisions to the original letter drafted by National. These have now been accepted and will form the basis of the National President's letter to employers. Thanks to those of you who provided comment, especially to Anne Pickard who took carriage of the feedback process.

At the Association's AGM WA's Laki Jayasuriya was made a Friend of the Association. Branch members are of course all familiar with Laki's work and the impact he has had on social policy at a state and national level. The WA Branch adds its congratulations to Laki along with those of the Association.

At the Branch level several very important things are happening, too. The feedback from the piloting of a portion of the State Conference in a regional centre indicates that the process was an overwhelming success! While the Branch is committed to following that model in future years, it was decided that since the Branch had to heavily subsidize the regional component of the Conference that next year we will focus on supporting regional sub committees to engage in CPE activities in anticipation of hosting a regional component to the Conference in 2002.

In relation to the 2001 State Conference, the Branch is very fortunate to have Sarah Kemp as Conference Convenor. I'm sure given her success with the rewrite of *Incomes and Outcomes*, we can all look forward to an outstanding conference in 2001!

Finally, I want to welcome Meredith Doyle, the Branch's newly appointed executive officer. Meredith, a qualified social worker, has been actively involved in the Branch previously and brings with her a range of skills, knowledge and abilities coupled with a strong commitment that I know will result in excellent support and service to the Branch as our Executive Officer. Welcome Meredith!

In closing, I just want to wish each and every member of the WA Branch and their loved ones a happy, healthy and safe holiday season. The energy and enthusiasm provided by the Committee of Management and all of the Branch's sub committees has been wonderful this year as has the work of numerous members of the Branch. May 2001 bring peace and joy to us all and perhaps even registration or a social policy officer or .....!!!

**BARBARA MEDDIN**

## LETTERS

**Dr Barbara Meddin**

**Branch President, AASW (WA Branch)**

Dear Dr Meddin

**Re: Sterilisation of persons not competent to consent**

The Board has had cause to consider a matter of conduct by a medical practitioner, as a result of a complaint concerning this issue. The Board, in conjunction with the Office of Health Review, has made the following statement. As indicated, the intent is to inform and remind medical practitioners, of the strict legal requirements that must be met, before performing sterilisation procedure, on someone not able to consent, as a result of disability affecting their capacity to make an informed reasoned decision.

In dealing with the specific complaint it was clear that other parties, including the Australian Association of Social Workers, may benefit from this information. Perhaps consideration could be given to distributing it or disseminating information through an appropriate medium to reach membership.

Yours sincerely

Simon M Hood

Registrar, Medical Board of Western Australia

20 November 2000

### **Sterilisation of persons not competent to consent**

Medical practitioners should already be aware of the rule that, generally speaking, procedures should not be undertaken unless the patient is properly informed and valid consent is given.

The Medical Board is concerned, however, that some practitioners may not be aware of the strict legal requirements that must be met before performing a sterilisation procedure on a person who is not able to consent because of disability affecting their capacity to make informed reasoned decisions.

As a general rule, adults who are intellectually disabled are not automatically prevented from consenting to treatment merely because of their disability. However, where a guardianship order is already in place, (or an application has been made for a guardianship order), the situation is clear. The *Guardianship and Administration Act 1990* requires that, in such circumstances, the consent of both the guardian and the Guardianship Board must be obtained. In no circumstances should a medical practitioner agree to sterilise a person who is under a guardianship order, without the prior consent of the Guardianship Board.

Where there is no guardianship order in place, (or no application has been made), the onus is on the medical practitioner to be satisfied that the patient is competent to consent. This requires a careful assessment that the patient fully understands the proposed procedure and has the capacity to give informed consent. *If there*

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is doubt that the patient has a full understanding of the nature and consequences of the procedure, it should not be performed. An application should be made to the Guardianship and Administration Board.

It is the medical practitioner's responsibility to be fully aware of the strict legal requirements in such practice. Discussions with patients should be carefully documented. The Medical Board reminds medical practitioners that failure to comply with the provisions of the Guardianship and Administration Act is an offence.

Professor CA Michael  
President Medical Board of WA

Mr D Kerslake  
Director Office of Health Review

25 November 2000

**Dr Barbara Meddin**  
**Branch President, AASW (WA Branch)**

Dear Barb

The Board at its recent weekend meeting gave serious consideration to the request from the WA Branch to employ a policy officer. This occurred after we had spent two days working more informally together on strategic planning for the Association and time during both the planning meeting and the Board meeting spent carefully considering the association's financial situation and priorities.

There was support expressed around the table for the proposal from the WA Branch, as social policy was again seen as a priority area in our strategic planning. As you will no doubt understand there were also strong sentiments about conservative financial management that does not further increase the planned budget deficit.

The motion that was passed at the meeting was as follows:

*"The Board believes it cannot further increase this year's budget deficit, and regrets it is not able to accede to the WA Branch submission for a policy officer in this financial year. The board restates its understanding that money raised by the WA Branch remains the money of that Branch, even though WA Branch is asked, along with all the other branches, not to spend its reserves."*

This was passed with one Director voting against (Director from WA) and one abstention. The minutes are not yet available for your consideration, yet I understand that this information needed to be sent to the Branch as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

Jo Gaha  
National President

**The Editor**  
**National Bulletin**  
**Australian Association of Social Workers**

Dear Editor

Having received a copy of the Annual Report 1999-2000 and Volume 10 Issue 5 the National Bulletin a number of concerns have so moved me as to feel compelled to write this letter.

The first and most important is a matter of principle. The letter from Elspeth Browne and the hawkish response from the Association's CEO raise important issues. These issues need debate, not attack. Members have a right to put their point of view and should be able to expect their views to be considered by their elected executive and directors.

There is no doubt that the older members of the profession (and I suspect I now number among them) have a greater difficulty in adjusting to new and different approaches. There is also no doubt that some of the recent developments of the association, particularly its investment and increased activity in the international arena, its public profile and social policy responses and its "product" development in national and branch newsletters have all been positive.

However in recent times there has been an increased trend towards centralisation and a diminution of the relative authority of branches. Under the legal structure of the Association, which is a company of limited liability by guarantee, the position of branches has always been legally and structurally weak.

As Elspeth quite correctly points out the Association started out as a federation and it was only following the decision to deregister as a trade union and the need to be legally protected that it became a company. At that time in Australia the only option was registration as a company of limited liability by guarantee. There was a clear acknowledgment that this model was by no means the ideal. That is why branches continued by agreement to function as the central core of the association. Separate accounts controlled by branches and the management of the Lyra Taylor bequest are examples.

Another example in 1993 was when the Western Australian Branch was required to repay to the national body a debt it had incurred through deficit spending. It had spent beyond its ability to pay and had no assets to sell. The national body provided the finance on condition it was repaid. Although this is in the strict legal sense nonsense it did preserve the integrity of the branch and its relationship to the whole. This is an issue of principle that would appear to no longer have currency.

Of great concern to me is the use of the word "units" to describe branches. When coupled with a clear intent to reduce branch capitation as signalled in the Annual Report the centralising is obvious. Branches are now being "directed" by resolution of the Board to seek approval for the employment of people and the development of local programs. There may be good reasons dictated by industrial and employment conditions to centralise the process to ensure equity and human resource uniformity but if

branches can afford to embark on activities within their jurisdiction they should be encouraged. This was always the agreed way.

The national/branch relationship has always been a point of tension illustrated by the constant reiterating to Directors at Director's meetings that they did not represent branches but were company directors, as if the two positions were incompatible. This has always been nonsense. Both roles can coexist. We had arrived at the point of the tail quite clearly wagging the dog. Approval for everything is being wrenched (pun not intended) back to the centre. The "company" is a legal entity but companies of limited liability by guarantee exist for the acquisition or conferring of the status of membership.

Of fundamental importance is the need to not only debate and resolve the issue of the responsibility between branches and the national body but also as Elspeth rightly suggests to refocus as a democratic and participatory organisation.

The second issue while not as important is more acute. The reported loss in the consolidated accounts for 1999/2000 is \$220,414. This represents a budget "blow-out" of 10%. This is of great concern to me as a member and past director.

It would be of interest to know at what point in the year the income shortfall was noticed and were strategies put in place to reduce expenditure? Similarly at what point did it become obvious that expenditure would overrun to these proportions? Have the lessons on fiduciary responsibility to which all directors were subjected fallen on deaf ears? The total assets of the association fell in the last financial year by \$64,132 and the accumulated funds from \$588,541 to \$361,127. There have been a number of years where expenditure has exceeded income.

This is the first time it has blown out to six figures. What is the current financial position? Have the directors put in place a strategy to insure the Associations expenditure stays within a conservative income expectation and the branches not plundered as a short term fix? The Association while it has a responsibility to advance national agendas also has a responsibility to support and encourage branches. The health of the Association is dependent on meeting both its national and branch goals, one should not dominate the other.

It is significant that branches receive a smaller amount of member's fees. This capitation determines the bottom line income figure. Some branches in recent years have either been forced or chosen to grow by developing other income sources. This was always encouraged and in many respects was healthy.

There is a danger with the centralisation of decision making and the reduction in branch autonomy that money raised by branches could be used at the determination of the directors for national programs. This would not only be morally dishonest but disruptive of the association and questionable in fiduciary terms.

It is perplexing that in the face of this extraordinary financial situation that scant mention is made of it in the Annual Report other than to signal a more controlling approach to branches and the possibility of a reduced capitation return. It is also concerning



## Introduction to Cognitive Therapy

**5th, 12th, 19th & 26 May 2001**

The *Introduction to Cognitive Therapy* course is an intensive 4 day training program in the core competencies essential to practising as a Cognitive Therapist.

The skills acquired can be applied to mental health practice, general practice, behavioural medicine and health promotion.

Cost (incl GST) \$880. Early bird registration (before 1 March 2001) \$770. Venue: Hollywood Hospital, Nedlands.

### For more information

Tel 08 9389 5155 or Fax 08 9389 5166.

that bonus and allowances to employees have increased from \$3,584 to \$11,246.

If this reflects performance outcomes then quite clearly financial management is not one of them. Come on directors it is your fiduciary responsibility to ensure good management.

The third issue of concern relates to the case of *Robinson v Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd* No. SCGRG-00-86 [2000] SASC 239 (4 August 2000). This case before the Full Court of the Supreme Court of South Australia has to date cost the association \$48,022 in legal fees. An appeal judgement in favour of the appellant overturned the previous order for costs and imposed an order that the Association pay 50% of the appellant's costs (a reverse of the previous order). This is another expenditure item that will appear in the 2000/2001 financial year. Has this amount been budgeted?

This issue raises many questions in relation to the director's responsibility. Who briefed counsel? What information was provided to the directors? In view of the first judgement and subsequent appeal what was the legal advice? Was a settlement considered? The published judgement makes it quite clear that the Association's By-Laws were not properly adhered to, some acts were tainted and the Associations response was not timely.

In view of the importance of this case and in light of the decision to expend a considerable amount of money in briefing a QC and other counsel a clear and full explanation is due to the Associations membership. The original judgment allowed the

*Continued on page 7*

# Information Sheet 2000-2001: AASW Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Insurance Scheme

## 1. Preamble

In 1996 AASW Ltd appointed Aon Professional Services as the Association's Insurance Brokers. They are leaders in marketing and development of Professional Indemnity Insurance and currently act as brokers for International Accounting Firms, and Professional Indemnity Group Schemes for Chiropractors, Physiotherapists, Psychologists and Accountants.

They have produced a Professional Indemnity Policy for all Association Members, that is both comprehensive in cover and very competitive in cost.

## 2. Cover

Some features of the scheme are provided below in summary form.

- The policy provides indemnity to the social worker against any claim or claims which arise out of any act, error or omission arising out of the conduct of practice.
- The policy covers claims first made to upon the social worker and reported to Underwriters during the current policy year, irrespective of when the act was alleged to have been committed (Unlimited Retroactive Liability).
- The policy includes Libel and Slander (Defamation).
- The policy pays all legal costs and expenses.
- Psychoanalytical psychotherapy is covered by the policy provided any claims that arise do so as a result of work undertaken by such persons in their capacity as a Social worker.

## 3. Insured

The Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd, State Committees, Financial Members and Associate Members (students). The definition of Insured is extended to include the individual member, their partnership, corporation, company or trading name.

## 4. Business or practice

Means the professional business or practising as a social worker or any activity declared by the Australian Association of Social Workers Ltd.

## 5. Situation

Worldwide (excluding USA/Canada/Mexico)

## 6. Limit of Indemnity (per member)

\$5,000,000 any one claim per member & \$10 000 000 in the aggregate per member.

## 7. Exclusions

Some of the more important exclusions are:

- Cover will not apply to claims or circumstances which have been known or reported prior to the inception date of the policy.
- Any claim made against the social worker as a result of any dishonesty, malicious or illegal acts.

## 8. Jurisdiction

Australia Papua New Guinea and New Zealand law courts.

## 9. Extensions

- Libel and slander
- Automatic reinstatement
- Loss of documents
- Principals
- Trade Practices Act & related legislation
- Dishonesty of employees
- Teaching
- Intellectual property
- Unlimited retroactive date

## 10. Public Liability

Cover is also provided to the AASW Ltd. and financial members who "shall become legally liable to pay for compensation in respect of:

- Bodily injury
- Damage to property occurring during the period of insurance as a result of an accident and happening in connection with the Business/Practice".

Limit of Liability: \$10,000,000  
Situation: Anywhere in Australia

## 12. Contact

David Berry or Wayne Trezona of Aon Professional Services can be contact directly to provide information and/or advise on this policy.

For information please contact either David or Wayne Tel: (08) 8301 1111 or Fax: (08) 8301 1100.

**Email: [apsadelaide@aon.com.au](mailto:apsadelaide@aon.com.au)**  
**Aon Professional Services**  
**GPO Box 514**  
**Adelaide SA 5001**

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON THE AASW COMBINED PROFESSIONAL INDEMNITY & PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

### **Question 1**

Does the policy cover Public Liability Insurance?

*Answer:*

The scheme covers Professional Indemnity (wrongful advice arising out of the conduct of the practice) and Public Liability (bodily injury/property damage to third parties)

### **Question 2**

If I become a "consultant" do I have to notify anybody of the change?

*Answer:*

*No.*

### **Question 3**

Does the AASW Professional Indemnity scheme cover me as a "consultant"?

*Answer:*

*Yes.* The Professional Indemnity Scheme covers all "financial members" including consultants automatically.

### **Question 4**

I have a partnership/company, does the policy cover this?

*Answer:*

*Yes.* The policy covers the financial member and the partnership/company name. It does not cover the other parties who may be social workers and who are not financial members.

### **Question 5**

If I am a consultant and receive a letter making threats etc. from an "unhappy client" do I have to report this to the insurance company or Aon?

*Answer:*

*Yes.* You must always immediately send to Aon, correspondence that you receive that may give rise to a claim some time later.

### **Question 6**

Do I wait for Summons or Writ from an "unhappy client" before I say anything to the insurance company or Aon?

*Answer:*

*No.* You must always report in writing any circumstances that may give rise to a Professional Negligence claim to Aon. Do not wait for the Summons or Writ. It is usually too late.

## New Members Wanted Children's Interest Subcommittee

Anyone interested in being a member of a committee dedicated to issues about children should come along to the AASW (WA Branch) Children's Interest Subcommittee.

We meet once a month, currently on a Thursday, 5.30 pm in West Perth.

For further details please contact either Beverley Woods on 9382 0757 (W) or Jenny Terry on 9336 2144 (W).

## *South West Subcommittee Meeting*

**Tuesday 13th February 2001**

4:00 pm Edith Cowan University Boardroom

The first meeting of the year!

Extended to include planning for the remainder of the financial year

All members welcome  
Be there to have your say!

## OPEN INVITATION

For all country and metro members to observe Branch Committee of Management Meetings.

- Coffee
- Networking
- Professional Development
- You're Welcome!

Lotteries House  
2 Delhi Street, West Perth  
on the  
2nd Tuesday of each month

**Phone Meredith 9420 7240**

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Association to proceed in its investigation. Did we proceed? It is not insignificant that there are examples of members having to battle with the Association's insurers to invoke coverage on a matter of professional practice with no guarantees that their legal bills will be met while the Association continues with ever mounting expenditure on the employment of lawyers. \$37,084 in 1998/99, mostly for the Constitution, another problematic endeavour, \$18,984 plus the \$48,022 spent defending the Robinson case in 1999/2000.

I would like to think that the Association's Directors are meeting their fiduciary duty with our (members) best interests at heart unfortunately with a financial loss of \$220,414 for the financial year of 1999/2000 the evidence is a little shaky.

I have been a director in recent times when the gap between expenditure and income was on the wrong side of the ledger. Motions were past, assurances were given and yet with all the growing signs and warnings it would seem little has been done to curb the growing loss.

It is also important to remember it was not long ago that branches were publically chastised through the annual report for a deficit and yet our auditors and accountants are noticeably silent with a reported deficit of very large proportions.

Sincerely  
Brian Wooller

**Mr Brian Crisp**  
*Editor, Sunday Times*

Dear Mr Crisp

Re: "Dementia: A Young Burden" by Di Sattler (Sunday Times, 26<sup>th</sup> November 2000)

The Australian Association of Social Workers would like to respond to the comment regarding a social worker's attitude of dementia/psychiatric patients, "...don't let the animals out...".

We would like to strongly emphasise this is not the commonly held attitude of the social work profession. The social work profession is highly sensitive to, and aware of the issues confronting elderly dementia sufferers and their carers/families.

Indeed, the profession has sought to promote greater community awareness and increase its own understanding through education forums and professional development. The social work profession acknowledges the painful experience presented by the writer and feels that case studies such as these can only assist in advancing community recognition of the needs of these sufferers and their families.

We are confident that the insensitivity suggested in the article of the social worker is not a true representation of social work values.

Yours sincerely

Dr Barbara J. Meddin MAASW, AccSW  
WA Branch President

30 November 2000

## **Mental Health Direct**

**1800 220 400**

### **New 24-hour mental health access line**

The Mental Health Division of the Health Department of WA has established a mental health information and access telephone service which will commence operation in December 2000.

The aim of the service is to make it easier for the public to find out what mental health services are available to them, facilitate service delivery closer to where people live, and increase participation by community-based health providers, such as general practitioners, in meeting the public's mental health needs.

The service will operate from Perth and employ experienced registered nurses to answer calls.

Mental Health Direct does not replace existing psychiatric emergency services, but will work closely with these specialist services.

The information provided via Mental Health Direct fall into one of the following categories:

1. A needs assessment of the caller focusing on the urgency and severity of their reported mental symptoms or concerns.
2. General information on mental illness and where to get further advice.
3. Information and advice to assist the caller in determining the type of mental health service they need to access.
4. Information on the availability and location of mental health care services, including after hours general practice and other mental health care providers.
5. Advice on steps that can be implemented prior to face-to-face contact, where needed.
6. Referral or connection to other emergency services (ambulance, Psychiatric Emergency Services, poisons information, crisis care etc) if required.
7. Call back to check progress where appropriate.

# Tribute To Branch's Retiring Executive Officer

## Farewell from the Executive Officer

On Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> December the Branch held a breakfast by the lovely river setting of Matilda Bay Restaurant, to celebrate the festive season, and to officially mark my farewell as Executive Officer of the WA Branch.

It was an honour to have so many friends and colleagues (from as far as Bunbury) attend to wish me well in my future endeavours and to mark the end of a twelve-year journey with the Association.

It was a week or so after the birth of my second daughter that I met with Joe Calleja, Maria Harries and Chris Coopes to informally discuss the expectations of the casual, time-limited position that had been advertised in the Branch newsletter way back in 1988. At that time we had no idea that this would develop and grow over the years to eventually become the position of Executive Officer for the Branch.

At that time the Branch's facilities were minimal, with a small office in Maylands housing an answering machine for members' inquiries. The administration of the Branch was completely managed by the voluntary resources of the Committee of Management and Convenors of the various committees operating at the time.

My twelve years with the Association has been marked by significant growth. Branch membership has more than doubled during this time. We have embraced the new information technologies, and now have a more spacious office with access to well equipped meeting rooms. We also have the services of a project officer to coordinate the annual state conference. Staff liaison between national and branch offices has expanded in the past few years with the introduction of yearly face-to-face meetings and regular teleconferencing. We even managed to offer a student social work placement this year for the first time.

The Position has also provided significant opportunities for personal growth. I don't think a year has passed in which I have not been required to learn new skills - mastering new computer software packages, the internet, financial management, organisation of events and so on. Managing the demands of two part-time jobs (a clinical social work post at Royal Perth Hospital) as well as those of raising a young family, meant a steep learning curve in time management and organisational skills. I am now, thanks to the AASW, better equipped and skilled to take on a range of jobs that I would not have considered possible in the past.

I have been inspired by the commitment and loyalty of the many social workers that I have had the privilege of working with in the past twelve years. Many of you have been significant role models and mentors for me during this time. I must take this opportunity to remind members that a large amount of the work done by the AASW is done by your colleagues on a voluntary capacity. It is important for all of us to consider not just what the AASW can do for us, but what we can contribute to our professional association.

I would like to thank past and present presidents, especially Barbara Meddin, Brian Wooller, Imelda Dodds, Maria Harries and Joe Calleja, vice presidents, executive members, convenors and committee members (far too many to mention individually) for all your hard work and the positive working relationships we have had. Your friendship and support has always been appreciated. I would also like to thank everyone who has phoned, emailed and written to me wishing me well in my future endeavours.

May I welcome Meredith Doyle-Hafid as the new Executive Officer for the WA Branch. I have enjoyed working alongside her for the past few weeks, and hope that she will find her work with the AASW as stimulating and interesting as I have.

For now I plan to enjoy the school holidays with my daughters. I am sure other work opportunities will become available in good time. I am sure that I will also remain involved (albeit in a different capacity) with the Association for many years to come.

I enjoyed this quote sent to me by a colleague from national office who also retired recently from the AASW after twelve years of service.

Remember:  
Each day is precious  
The past is history  
The future is unknown  
Now is the present  
**And that is what it is a PRESENT**

**LIZ RETAMAL**



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I can't help but reflect back on one of my first meetings with Liz. I think it was when I was Vice President for Education. Imelda was President and we used to have Branch Executive meetings following each Committee of Management meeting. We'd go to Imelda's house and somehow Liz would have always conjured up the most delicious take a ways enhanced in some way by something special she would prepare for the Executive just to say she cared!

Feeding us, a good social work strategy in any circumstances, was the least of her contributions to us. I was continually impressed with her strong sense of organization, her professionalism and her ethics and integrity.

Those same qualities meant so much to me when I subsequently become Branch president about 15 months ago now. No president has ever had a better induction than provided by Liz. Handover from Brian aside, it was Liz who helped me learn how to be Branch President.

Her historical knowledge of the Branch and its processes coupled with her sound social work knowledge and skills has made my job so much easier. Liz, I'll really miss you. Lots of luck in where ever your career takes you.

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#### **DR. BARBARA MEDDIN** **BRANCH PRESIDENT**

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In 1993 I was prevailed upon to consider taking on the Branch Presidency of the Australian association of Social Workers. For me this felt at the time a little bit like drowning. It was the third time I had occupied that position. The big difference between the previous two occasions and third time was Liz. The reason I was able to complete the maximum of three terms as president was in large measure due to Liz.

Liz is the best organised most task-focussed person that I have worked with. She is able to keep everyone on track and meet deadlines with the most loosely organised people. Her efforts on behalf of the association are now legendary. The remarkable ability to juggle her family responsibilities with at times meeting the demand of three employers was truly astounding.

There was an occasion when she damaged an Achilles tendon in one leg (a fairly rare thing to do) not to settle for that she did the same to the other leg. Full plaster, hospitalization and the long and necessary period of rehabilitation did not stop her. She merely moved her office down from its mezzanine gallery to the dining area, keeping the rest of us on task and demonstrating that whatever happened "the show must go on".

I am not sure that Liz still plays tennis and netball but I am sure that her single minded, perseverance and ability to do a top job under the most trying of circumstances is a quality that she will take with her wherever she goes.

I remember well the early morning meetings. The girls making all the usual demands while getting ready for school while Greg

was organizing himself off to work. Me signing letters and Liz dealing with all our competing demands as well as responding to the never ceasing phone calls and preparing those wonderful committee agendas. Surprisingly the girls got to school. Greg got to work. The letters were sent and the agenda was always ready on time.

It was this association with Liz and Greg that I blame for pitching me into the cyber world of the computer, the email and the Internet. Their home was a computer minefield. Everybody apart from me sitting there in the mornings or alternatively at night checking the correspondence would be doing something on one or other of the infernal machines.

It was a busy and stimulating time for me. The amount of work that was done could not have been done without Liz who made my six years as president a rich and fulfilling experience. She taught me about the importance of completion, of meeting deadlines and that if you are organised it works better. Working with Liz was a rare experience. In the future whatever she turns her hand to will benefit from her unique qualities.

Thank you for all of your support, sharing in the hard work, the fun and the achievements.

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#### **BRIAN WOOLLER**

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Liz, you made a memorable time even more memorable - and a difficult task much easier. What more can I say? Lots perhaps but I recall that we did a lot with few words when you were Executive Officer and I was President of the AASW (WA Branch) so I will continue in that style.

The reason we worked so well as a team is that you did what had to be done without endlessly consulting me and when you had to consult, you generally were ahead of me anyway. Hence - few words! The things that really mattered we did ponder about and you were always very available and wise so I felt that we shared the job.

You were also very wise about the rest of the partnership with the Committee of Management and the membership and so communications seemed always to be (relatively) seamless and efficient.

As I recall, the real moments of trial were ones when we both felt that it was all too much. We both had other commitments and yet it seemed at times that we were at the beck and call of everyone - and, at one time, it was the media who expected a twenty four hour availability and we aired our shared despair over quality glasses of wine or two with a gaiety that defied the reality of our tiredness.

My fondest memory is of all of the times that your home and family life were put on hold as we worked on something that had to be done - and Greg, Claudia and Sofia either watched with amusement or got on with what was important in family life at the time. What was so good about this is that, for those times, the camaraderie did envelop the family and I was never 'evicted'.

And the family were always so obliging. I recall Sofia happily posing for a photograph with me for the WACOSS News - a means of providing a soft look for a jaded volunteer! And I remember learning so much about computers and the law and desk top publishing from Greg - between discussions about AASW things.

Of course, most of our work at that time was done without modems and emails so there was a well worn path between Leederville and Subiaco. When I think of it, there were, and probably still are many worn paths between many homes and your home - all in the interest of the AASW. Your efficiency was such that you did 'round trips' - and you were generally home again before 9.00 am. The West Perth post office staff will miss you.

Thanks for all of the work that you have done Liz. You have taken the WA Branch administration from a neonatal stage to healthy youthful exuberance and have reared us well. And thank you for being such a professional, dedicated and inspiring colleague. Every best in this next stage of your career.

### MARIA HARRIES

I first met Liz on a liaison visit for one of our students at Fremantle Hospital, so long ago I cannot remember when exactly. A few years later Liz joined our department as a part time tutor and was involved in teaching in the practice labs, integration groups, enhancing counselling skills as well as doing liaison visits on behalf of our students on placement. Still later Liz and I worked closely together in arranging field placements.

Over those years I came to appreciate the flexibility Liz had in adapting to a range of demanding situations both in the classroom and outside it. Her ability to carry a range of diverse roles and to keep track of everything was quite astounding, as was her efficiency.

Liz was respected by the students she taught, contributed regularly to the structure of the courses and offered alternate ways of teaching them. She was equally adept at tutoring or playing a client role. The debriefings after classes were always filled with good humour from Liz that made dealing with some of the more demanding, challenging students, less frustrating.

Working closely with Liz on the difficult task of locating field placements was particularly rewarding for me. Again, her sense of humour made this job much easier, and I actually added to my vocabulary a range of stress-reducing expressions that I cannot repeat here. She even tolerated my incorrect use of Spanish on occasion, never missing the opportunity to embarrass me whenever the opportunity arose.

The AASW may be losing Liz, but I am hopeful that she may still find time to continue her work with us now and again. In any event, I wish her well with a normal work routine for a change.

### TOM BARRETT DEPT OF SOCIAL WORK, UWA

It has been my pleasure to work with Liz over the past ten years - most of our contact has been through the Annual State Conference. Also during that time I have got to know her family too, often through our late night efforts working on some particular aspect of the conference.

The support that Liz has given to me has been valuable as we struggled through procedural matters and tried to work through the most effective ways of doing things. Her opinions are always well considered and from my point of view, it has been good to share the problems and celebrate the highs. We have had our share of tearing our hair and cries of frustration but in the end the results have been produced.

It has also been gratifying to see how the Branch has developed over the years and Liz's organisational skills as the Executive Officer have played a big part in that development.

The systems which have been put in place will hold the Branch in good stead for many years to come.

I would like to thank Liz for her support as I have gradually mastered some of the intricacies of the computer, her assistance in helping me set up the systems has been invaluable.

### MARIAN MAUGHAN

## NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members:

- Katherine Axten (Student Associate)
- Debra Farmer (Student Associate)
- Daniel Ford (Family and Children's Services)
- Naomi Highman
- Sarah Kew (Student Associate)
- Kelly Lloyd (Student Associate)
- Robyn McInnes (Student Associate)
- Louise Morley (Student Associate)
- Carrie Sertorio (Student Associate)

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