



THE WEST AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKER

President's Report

Dear members of the WA Branch

In this President's Report I want to bring to your attention several very important matters. They are:

- a paper from the National President concerning how funding will be managed within the AASW;
- WA Branch strategic planning;
- the Branch's recent research symposium; and
- a call for papers for the 2001 State Conference.

Constitutional change

By now you would have received a paper from Jo Gaha, National President, asking you to give feedback on essential services for the Association and how to provide them. The paper indicates that the Association is concerned about equity and access in the Association. The paper proposes a new funding formula the Association hopes to use to divide up the income received from membership fees.

The Board endorsed at its November Board meeting the desire to change from its current funding formula to a new one. This funding formula will do away with dividing funds up based on a capitation formula whereby Branches receive a certain percentage of money based on the number of members a Branch has. At the moment, Branches receive 33 % of dues paid to the Association by members of their Branch, whilst the Association at a national level retains 67% of all member fees to fund national programs, running the national office and to pay for expenses of the Board and Executive etc.

The paper sent to you says that it is to "...communicate to you a decision of the Board and to involve you in the detail of the development of this new funding model."

While indeed the paper is about conveying a decision taken by the Board - to look at an alternative way of dividing up funds within the Association, what the paper is really

about is a constitutional change. To embark upon the model proposed within the paper, a constitutional change would be required as capitation as a way of allocating funding is actually specified in the Association's constitution. It is unfortunate that the paper doesn't communicate this more clearly and actually ask you as members to provide feedback on whether or not you would support a constitutional change.

The paper indicates that baseline funding would be provided to all Branches "*not solely based on the numbers of members a Branch has*" and that remaining monies would be allocated on a "*tendering basis among Branches, committees and programs.*"

While I agree that the issues of equity and access are significant for the Association, I think that there are many ways to achieve equity and access and that doing away with capitation and instituting a tendering process for funding will have many consequences other than achieving equity and access.

I personally believe that such constitutional change would rob Branches of their autonomy, centralise funding and bring in a process that would deny Branches the flexibility to respond to issues and priorities in a timely manner, act as a disincentive to Branches to generate revenue, pit Branches against one another and disproportionately favour national programs. This is my personal opinion.

As many of you would know, the WA Branch was not permitted to access any of its reserves this past year to fund its top priority - that of engaging a part time Social Policy Officer, and to access media assistance to help the Branch respond in a timely fashion to social policy issues that affect social work clients in WA and that affect us as professional

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

social workers in WA. Furthermore, our CEO indicated in a recent conversation to me as Branch President that a decision as to whether the WA Branch can access its reserves for the coming year will not be taken until the June National Board Meeting but the Branch Budgets are due to National office by the end of March.

If this is the process now, what makes one believe that it would be any better should we have to tender for funding in the future. Why should Branches work to achieve reserves if they are unable to access them to enhance services to its own members?

Brian Wooller, the WA Branch's most recent life member, past WA Branch President, previous National Board Member and former National Treasurer and a working group from the WA Committee of Management will be contacting you in the near future concerning forums to be held by the WA Branch in relation to this proposed constitutional change.

I would urge you to read the paper you have received from National, attend the forums run by the Branch, and return the member response form to national office with your position on the proposed constitutional change.

Branch strategic planning day

The WA Branch held a strategic planning day on Saturday, February 17th with Committee of Management members and sub committee convenors present. The day was a highly productive day and one filled with energy, enthusiasm and commitment by those who attended. Using priorities set by the Association at its national strategic planning days held in November in Canberra as a starting basis, the Branch identified its priorities for the coming year.

In addition to reaffirming our previous priority in relation to social policy, top priority went to achieving registration for social workers in WA followed by development and support to our four regional sub committees. The latter will be quite a challenge given the funding implications in relation to being able to access Branch reserves but the Branch is already considering a range of options to make this happen.

Another top priority was about a new and better way of working together, such that sub committees communicated better with one another and with the COM and worked together on projects and priorities in common. More on all this in subsequent newsletters.

Many thanks to Virginia Scott who volunteered to facilitate the workshop for the Branch. Congratulations, Virginia for a job well done!

Research symposium

The WA Branch in conjunction with the three schools of social work in WA has recently hosted a research symposium. The first two days of the symposium have been held at UWA with the final day to be in Bunbury. I can't begin to tell you the electricity that one could feel when they walked into the room.

Those in attendance would tell you that the symposium was a quality endeavour and that it is so important to have research clearly on the Branch's agenda. One of the outcomes of the symposium was to establish a research sub-committee. If you're interested in joining please let Meredith Doyle, Branch Executive Officer know of your interest.

State Conference

By now you would have also received the call for papers for this year's state conference, *Social work in the market place*. This year we are hoping to present workshops and papers in four specific streams. The proposed streams are:

- social work with involuntary clients,
- welfare reform,
- reconciling differences, and
- health.

If you are interested in presenting a paper, doing a workshop or putting on a skills development day, please let the conference planning committee know. Speaking of the committee, more members for the planning committee are sought, so if you're interested, let Marion Maughan, Project Officer, know.

An open invitation

Want to know more about how the WA Branch works, get involved with the work of the Branch, have your voice heard? Then why not attend the Branch's Committee of Management meetings or join a subcommittee? If you'd like to attend a COM meeting or link with a subcommittee, again please contact Meredith.

BARBARA MEDDIN
BRANCH PRESIDENT

LETTERS

Dr Barbara Meddin
President, WA Branch

Dear Barbie

Greetings for the New Year and belated thoughts. I am writing to say "Thankyou!" for the special status you have conferred on me as a Friend of the Association. When I read this in your President's report in the newsletter I was taken by surprise!

For one thing, I always regarded myself as a "friend" of the Profession and in particular the WA Branch of the Association. However, I do appreciate the formal status conferred by you and your colleagues.

All the very best in your stewardship of the Association in the years to come

Warm regards
Laki Jayasuriya

Note: The above is an excerpt of a letter from Professor Jayasuriya.

Professor Jayasuriya has for some time been a "Friend of the WA Branch" and at the recent Board meeting of the National body was officially made a Friend of the Association nationally for his significant and dedicated contribution over many years, here and overseas, to Social Work and social welfare reform particularly in the areas of multiculturalism.

Professor Jayasuriya has also been recently elected a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and has been conferred an Honorary degree of Doctor of Letters in recognition of the distinctive contribution he has made to the field of social policy and as foundation Professor of Sociology and Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Colombo in Sri Lanka.

Ms Carol Martin
PO Box 1433 Broome
Western Australia 6725

Dear Ms Martin,

We are writing to offer you warm and sincere congratulations on your success in last weekend's election. To be the first female Aboriginal parliamentarian elected in Australia is a tremendous achievement, one that will no doubt inspire many other indigenous Australians and young women to actively participate in the country's political processes.

Of special interest to the AASW is your background in social work. The AASW is very aware of the complexity of social work's

SOCIAL WORK AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE 10TH APRIL 2001

Make a note in your diary about this forthcoming evening event.

Details about this event, recognised as one of the social work highlights of the year, will be made available to members once the guest speaker has been confirmed.

relationship with the indigenous population of Australia. The role social workers played in the creation of the stolen generations is something the profession has still to come to terms with in many ways. At the same time increasing numbers of indigenous students are graduating from social work courses.

At present the AASW's top social policy priority is to open up respectful discussions both within the profession and with other groups to explore how social workers can further pursue reconciliation with the indigenous community. We would be interested to hear your views on this.

Indeed we would welcome your involvement with the AASW at both branch and national levels, and hope that this will be the start of ongoing communication between yourself and our national and branch offices.

Your own story would be of great interest to our members (your commitment to bringing services to Aboriginal people and your commitment to social work education for example) and we hope that you will be available to be interviewed for our branch and national newsletters in the near future.

Yours sincerely

Dr Barbara Meddin
President, WA Branch

Jo Gaha
National President

13 February 2001

Dr Aaron Groves
Director Metropolitan Mental Health Service

Dear Dr Groves

Re: Changes to Clinical Practice at the Milpara Interim Accommodation Service

The Western Australian Branch of the AASW would like to take this opportunity to respond to the recent proposal by Fremantle Hospital and Health Services and the South West Metropolitan Regional Management Group for Mental Health Services in relation to staffing at the Milpara Interim Accommodation Service.

The proposal is contained in the document "Milpara Evaluation and Proposal for an Improved Service". The document states that the Service will not employ clinicians from the disciplines of social work, psychology or occupational therapy onsite at Milpara and will move to a mental health nursing only model of primary care. While a number of assumptions may be made as to the motivation behind the changes, the outcome remains of concern to the Association.

The National Mental Health Policy and subsequent policy developments such as the National Standards for Mental Health Services (1995) and the second National Mental Health Plan (1998) have encouraged a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to mental health issues. These policies include a clear recognition of the importance of the social context and social consequences of mental illness.

The five following points are relevant to any discussion on this issue:

Milpara has been operating with generic positions for over six years and during this period won a bronze medal for excellence at the 1996 THEMHS National Conference.

There are ongoing difficulties in recruiting sufficient numbers of mental health nurses and this decision will only compound the situation.

Current literature reinforces the value of a multidisciplinary approach to the delivery of mental health services.

Milpara fulfils a number of important but differing functions including respite, emergency and transitional accommodation and support. Because of this staff should have a wide range of knowledge and skills, however this will now change because only one discipline, nursing, will be involved.

One of the most important changes in recent years has been the State and Federal Government policy that consumers, both primary and secondary, should be involved in decisions which will have some effect on them. Was there significant consultation on this major decision?



Introduction to Cognitive Therapy

5th, 12th, 19th & 26th 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.

The proposed changes to the Milpara service are of concern both as the new model's operational philosophy remains unclear and most significantly may reflect other systemic shifts away from multidisciplinary care.

The WA Branch of the AASW seeks clarification on two points. First of all, why is it that a unidiscipline model is the preferred way to deliver services and thus exclude other allied health professionals such as social work? Secondly, are the proposed changes to the Milpara Service a part of a management decision to erode social work and other allied health services either within the South West metropolitan corridor or within the Metropolitan Mental Health Service?

As you are aware the AASW has recently developed a set of competency standards for social workers in mental health settings and remains committed to participating in the development of high quality consumer - centred care in the community as equal partners with all other disciplines.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Barbara Meddin
Branch President
24 January 2001

*The Honourable Dr Michael Wooldridge
Minister for Health and Aged Care*

Dear Dr Wooldridge

Following your comments on ABC TV news on 23 January 2001 regarding the possibility of providing GPs with a Medicare item number for special counselling I am writing to suggest some additional strategies for your consideration.

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is very pleased to see your appreciation of the pivotal role counselling has in the treatment of many mental health conditions, especially depression. Even more impressive is your openness to counselling services being funded through the Medicare system.

However, the AASW is concerned that GPs are already overloaded, particularly in rural areas. Adding an expectation that they will be able to deliver intensive or ongoing therapeutic counselling to people in crisis or with chronic conditions may be expecting too much.

In some areas of Australia GPs are taking the initiative and employing specialist counsellors (social workers, psychologists and other appropriately qualified allied health professionals) within their practices to deal with the nonmedical aspects of their patients' health. As you are clearly aware social, situational and relational issues are often a critical part of health problems and effective treatment requires attention to these issues in conjunction with the treatment of any relevant medical condition.

I understand that the Victorian Department of Health has recently provided funding through the Divisions of General Practice for the employment of generalist counsellors in some regions because of high levels of need that cannot be met by GPs.

These sorts of flexible and cooperative approaches, that recognise the utility of employing the right person for the right job, are clearly going to be more cost effective and provide the community with better services. I hope that this letter will be the start of a productive dialogue with you and your department.

Yours sincerely

Rebecca Naylor
Acting President Australian Association of Social Workers

25 January 2001

URGENT ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS Advanced Notice SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING

4th April 2001, 5:30 PM

Do you want to have a say in your Association?

Do you want to retain control of state needs or have this led by National?

It is important to be at this meeting to find out what is happening in your Association and to tell us your views.

Information will be sent out shortly to all members giving background information regarding significant suggested changes to the Association, its finances and possibly its constitution.

This meeting will be held to hear your views so that your Branch representatives can represent you effectively.

**Enquiries to -
Meredith Doyle
Tel: 9332 0019
Fax: 9310 3936
aaswwa@aasw.asn.au**

Are you interested in attachment/separation, connection/reconnection and identity?
All of these are central issues in adoption but are relevant to families who have experienced separation and loss or are challenged by reconnection.
This is the workshop for you!

Adoption Research & Counselling Service

Has pleasure in presenting a workshop with

Evelyn Robinson

Author of the acclaimed book **Adoption and Loss - The Hidden Grief**

Evelyn Robinson is a birth mother, a social worker and an academic. She is currently employed as a counsellor with ARMS South Australia. She has presented papers on loss and grief in adoption both nationally and internationally.

From the perspective of a birth mother, a social worker and an academic, Ms Robinson explores the issues of loss and grief in adoption - the effects on those personally involved and the reasons why their grief is not easily resolved. She explores ways of healing the pain surrounding adoption.

and

Judy Durey

Judy Durey is an adoptee, a former nurse and practicing visual artist. She holds a Visual Arts degree from Curtin University, WA and an Interdisciplinary Honours degree from the School of Arts, Murdoch University. She is currently extending her honours project, "Loss, Adoption and Desire" towards her Ph.D.

Judy expresses adoption in terms of a life long process which is always in flux. Using her personal experience as a starting point to the text, she weaves together her art practice and academic research to examine loss in adoption. Through her 'installation' work she attempts to highlight the emotional intensity of search and reunion and examine the challenges when (re)stor(y)ing family narrative. Although the work is about 'closed adoption' it reflects the complexity of many lives today and highlights the need to belong - to be part of a continuum, and is very relevant to other areas of family formation.

Tuesday 20th March 9.30am - 4.30pm

Perth Flying Squadron Yacht Club, The Esplanade, Dalkeith.

\$125 includes morning and afternoon tea and lunch (Registrations and payments close 9th March 2001).

This workshop is relevant not only for those who work in the area of adoption but also for those concerned with children in out-of-home care, step families, child migrants and families formed by the new birth technologies.

To secure a place, please return your form to ARCS 38 Queens Crescent, Mt Lawley 6050

Telephone 9370 4914 Fax 9370 4917 Email arcs@iinet.net.au

Cheques to be made payable to ARCS

Name of participant	Name of organisation
Address	Tel: Fax: Email:

CPE EVENTS

***Suicide Prevention Australia's 8th National Conference
Celebrating the Long Eventful Journey
Suicide Prevention; A Human Odyssey***
Sydney, 7-9 April 2001
Contact: Conference Secretariat PH:02 9211 1788
email: conference@suicidepreventionaust.org

Social Work Day, 16th May 2001
Keep a lookout for events near you and in your workplace
Contact: Meredith Ph: 9420 7240

Diversity in Health: Sharing Global Perspectives
Sydney, 28 – 30 May 2001
National conference on multicultural health and wellbeing
Information on website at: www.tmhc.nsw.gov.au/diversity.htm
Contact: Project Officer Jennifer Herron
Mon, Tue & Wed Ph: 02 9840 3800

***Social Work in the Marketplace
AASW (WA Branch) State Conference***
Perth, 21-23 August 2001
Contact: Marion Maughan
9330 2585, Fax:9317 3891
email: mmaughan@telstra.easymail.com.au

IFSW Conference, Managing Conflicts in Social work
27-30 August 2001
Contact: IFSW Europe Secretariat
PO BOX 69 DK-1003, Copenhagen K, Denmark
Tel +45 4038 6758, email: ifsweu@post8.tele.dk

AASW National Conference: Think/Act/Local/Global
Melbourne, 23-26 Sept 2001
ICMS Conference Secretariat
PH: +61 (0)3 9682 0244
email: aasw@icms.com.au

***On a Journey Through Grief To the Heart of Healing
NALAG Biennial National Conference***
Perth, 4-6 October 2001
Contact: Keynote conferences Ph: 9382 3799,
email keynote@ca.com.au or website: www.griefaustralia.org

SOCIAL WORK DAY IS COMING

We want you to celebrate *Social Work Day* by telling the rest of us about ways *YOU* make a difference with your clients, or in your area of social work.

If you do direct client work, are doing research, are challenging policies, are teaching other social workers, are using your social work skills in other fields, then you are making a difference!

Celebrate this. Tell us about what you are doing and help us to celebrate our roles as social workers in the West Australian community.

Have you considered writing a story about your work or project? Interested?

If you are, then send a written story to us before the last week in March 2001.

It would be published in a forthcoming newsletter.

Send your story to

**Executive Officer
AASW (WA Branch)
PO Box 198
West Perth 6872**

email: aaswwa@aasw.asn.au

NET WATCH

The Aged Care Network
<http://www.agedcarenetwork.com.au>

Members may wish to consider visiting the web site of a recently established service. The web site is operated by Aged Care Network Pty Ltd. It is a *free* service for people to locate and obtain details about aged care facilities in WA. (The fees paid by the aged care service providers registered with the network finance the cost of running the web site.)

The web site (<http://www.agedcarenetwork.com.au>) illustrates very well the possibilities for using the internet as a primary tool for listing and being able to obtain details about community services.

Families of elderly persons requiring aged care residential services can use the web site to make an initial appraisal of a facility. (Details of other service providers not registered with the network are also listed - but these are not contactable via the online searching and application process.)

Residential service providers registered with the network are presented by a series of photos plus additional information about the type of accommodation and other essential details. This process occurs through an easy to use filtering and querying process on the web site. For instance, a potential user of a service, can search for the type and level of care that is available, the location of accommodation facilities, the provision of essential nursing services and additional special accommodation needs.

After a number of facilities have been identified as most likely to meet the needs of the elderly person requiring accommodation, the web site offers an online application process. This stage includes contacts details so that an on site visit can be arranged to inspect potential services.

An excellent feature is the use of a common application form, which is filled out online. This provides families with a much simpler application process, as separate and different application forms are not required to be completed for each facility.

The application form is password (encrypted) protected so that personal information is not accessible to anyone else but nominated accommodation facilities. Applicants can also establish an email account with the network, so that they can send and receive email to nominated aged care providers.

As not everyone has internet access, the Aged Care Network also offers a freecall service. Well worth a visit.

PARTY PEOPLE NEEDED!

Do you have a flair for planning celebrations?

We are about to celebrate Social Work Day and would like to plan a series of 'parties' or events to help people all over the State to share in this celebration.

Are you interested in seeing Social Work Day celebrated within your community or area? Do you have ideas that you would like to put forward on ways that this day can be made better? Would you like to help organise the day?

We are looking for enthusiastic people who would like to take part in the working party for Social Work Day. You don't need to be city based - we can organise email meetings or teleconferences.

This is a short, time framed involvement so you are not committing yourself to a year's work. This is another chance for you to make a difference in social work. If you are interested in joining a vibrant and enthusiastic group of social workers in their attempt to make this a great day, contact -

Meredith
08 9420 7240
aaswwa@aasw.asn.au

Norma Welsh
normaw@fcs.wa.gov.au

Kimberley Pilbara Subcommittee

The first teleconference meeting of the year will be held on Tuesday – March 27th 2001. At this meeting we hope to:

- elect a co convenor from the Kimberley;
- discuss CPE activities for the two regions (current proposals);
- discuss feedback from the WA Branch Strategic Planning Day;
- plan future teleconferences and other options for linking up throughout 2001; and
- discuss any other issues of concern.

If you are interested in any issues for social workers in these regions, please contact:

Lanie Pianta 9144 1111
or lanie.pianta@health.wa.gov.au

The subcommittee needs your participation