



The West Australian Social Worker

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REGISTRATION: ISSUES AND DEVELOPMENTS

BY BRIAN DODDS

Introduction

This discussion paper attempts to briefly outline some issues relating to the Australian Association of Social Work's application for registration of the profession of social work by State governments. There have been a number of formal reviews of State legislation relating to registration of other professions and health care complaints. Preliminary reading shows various options have emerged in relation to ways of dealing with the currently unregistered professions. This paper outlines these options to assist discussion and decision making and provides a brief review of AASW efforts to gain registration for the profession.

Background

The AASW has actively pursued the registration of social workers since 1968. The history of the effort made is well summarised in the earlier AASW Discussion Paper *Self-Regulation - The Way Forward* (August 1994). Excerpts of this are reproduced here.

In the 1980s every state branch co-operated in a National effort to achieve this outcome. A national policy was established and each branch negotiated with the respective state government to have legislation introduced. The strategy was state based, as there was no mechanism for national registration. In 1985 the Northern Territory introduced the *Health Practitioners and Allied Health Professionals Registration Act*. Registration for social workers in the Northern Territory was based on their eligibility for membership of the AASW. No other State or Territory introduced registration of social workers by title.

By the late 1980s the federal government was committed to a major reform agenda in the industrial, educational, training and trade areas. The government policy shift was to de-regulation and mutual recognition. State governments endorsed the re-structuring proposals.

The Vocational Education, Employment and training Committee (VEETAC) was given specific responsibilities to review partially regulated professions. Heads of Government agreed in November 1991 that registration of these professions (the partially registered professions) should be removed unless there is overwhelming evidence for retention. It was decided social work did not pose a threat to public health and safety. As a result the Northern Territory legislation was repealed in April 1993.

The AASW therefore proceeded with self-regulation. From this came the development of the continuing professional education (CPE) program and accredited social worker status. Registration represented and still represents one of the quality assurance strategies of the Association.

NSW Branch approach to NSW Health Minister

On 2 October 1997, Jill Davidson, President of the NSW Branch of the AASW, wrote to The Hon. Andrew Refshauge, then Deputy Premier, Minister for Health, and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, with an attached position paper on registration of social workers. He responded with the information that the Australian Health Minister's Conference (AHMC) had agreed that all new requests for registration of health professional groups in any state, be considered on a national level by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) (made up of CEO's etc. of Health Departments). This principle stemmed from the Commonwealth Mutual Recognition Act 1992, and applied across all ministerial portfolios.

- Dr. Refshauge attached for our information two documents:
- AHMAC Criteria for assessing the need for statutory regulation of unregulated health professions; and
 - Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Principles and Guidelines for National Standard Setting and Regulatory Action by Ministerial Councils.

Continued on page 3

IN THIS ISSUE

Article: <i>Registration: issues & developments</i> by Brian Dodds	1
Contact details & office bearers (WA Branch)	2
Social policy issues	5
Letters	6
Netwatch	7
Congratulations Chris coopes	8
Mental Health Subcommittee	8
Forum: Fostering resilience: the alternative story	8
New members	9
Tony Cooke to join Curtin Uni	9
Article: <i>Passive welfare</i> by Sheila Shaver.....	11

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The current task

As part of this research, other reviews of legislation relating to health professions and other reports on complaints in health provision have been gathered by the NSW Branch. Out of these emerge some distinctions and issues which the AASW needs to take into its thinking before our final application paper is drafted in order to be prepared for all contingencies.

The task before the AASW (WA Branch) now is to prepare an application for registration of social workers by title according to the criteria and the documents obtained from the Deputy Premier of NSW (Dr Refshauge) by the AASW (NSW Branch). Research is underway on the required information.

Review of the NSW Psychologists Act 1989

This Act was being reviewed in NSW. The Issues Paper (December 1996) prepared by the NSW Health Department supported the continuation of registration of Psychologists, even after reviewing the arguments in relation to effects on competition. This document provides a good example for the further preparation of the AASW submission.

Wood Royal Commission NSW

This Commission was very concerned about the lack of sufficient monitoring and screening processes for those working with children or having close contact with them in the course of their official duties (pp 585) as well as the lack of disciplinary procedures in Department of Community Service and others. The NSW Health Care Complaints Commission was held up as a good process (see below). The term social worker was used in relation to a number of people in the report. One mention is of a social worker who observed a child (who had been sexually abused) being interviewed by a Department of Community Services District Officer.

The interview was later found to be biased and leading in a way that prevented prosecution. Other more serious allegations were made against a person called a social worker, who was initially employed by DOCS, then in a position in a hospital. There is no suggestion he was a qualified social worker. The issue of recovered memories warranted a whole chapter in the report and it is recommended counsellors adhere to strict guidelines. One inquiry by the Health Care Complaints Commission was terminated on the basis the counsellor was an unregistered health practitioner. This case confirms the need elsewhere addressed for the registration of all persons purporting to work as health practitioners (pp 666).

Review of Western Australian Health Practitioner Legislation - Discussion Paper Oct 1998

The principal aims of the review are to improve protection for health consumers in Western Australia, satisfy the National Competition Policy (NCP) review requirements and provide the health consumers of Western Australia with effective and, so far as possible, uniform practitioner legislation (Foreword). Section 7 deals with unregistered health practitioners.

It was noted that a 1989 Committee recommended that registration be allowed but left to the individual professions to initiate and argue and although many had made submissions since then, including social workers, only osteopaths had achieved it.

However, also noted is that the Victorian Government was suggesting registration of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Overall this Discussion Paper is not negatively disposed to registration of other professions if all the criteria can be satisfied.

Review of Occupational Therapists Act SA 1998

The Act to register Occupational Therapists in South Australia was also reviewed. Information from OT Australia SA Branch is that they had to lobby hard to retain registration, but have now managed to do so. This is one of the professions where registration exists in some states but not others. The Nurses Act is also been under review in SA.

Joint Committee on the Health Care Complaints Commission NSW Final Report.

Unregistered Health Practitioners: The Adequacy and Appropriateness of Current Mechanisms for Resolving Complaints. December 1998

This document goes to the heart of the issues with which our Association is concerned. It considers therapists and psychotherapists 'have the potential to cause harm due to a number of factors including the vulnerability of patients and the potential for abuse of the relationship of trust which, in many cases, develops over a long period of time (pp21).

The report discusses the limits of self-regulation in professions, which do not have strong professional associations. The report mentions the Australian Association of Social Workers as an example of one that is strong, but notes the evidence given to it by Jill Davidson that the Association cannot enforce standards with non members or those who resign on investigation.

This report also takes note of that the Victorian Review of Traditional Chinese Medicine recommended registration of that profession.

The recommendation of particular relevance to this discussion is that the Minister examine the feasibility of establishing umbrella legislation to cover unregistered health care practitioners which establishes a generic form of registration, generic compliant and disciplinary mechanisms, a uniform code of conduct, entry criteria agreed among the relevant professions and an Advisory Board to the Minister (pp 6).

Traditional Chinese Medicine in Victoria

In Victoria, a Ministerial Advisory Committee to Health Minister reviewed the use of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and produced two reports; *Towards a Safer Choice* and *Traditional Chinese Medicine: Report on Options for Regulation of Practitioners*. The reports recommended registration of practitioners of TCM, resulting in legislation being prepared. However, it is unclear whether or not this proceeded any further.

Queensland

The legislative and Policy branch of the Queensland Department of Health reviewed a model of umbrella legislation for 15 registered health professions. It aimed at introducing two Bills. The first was to provide one disciplinary and Complaints mechanism for all these professions. The second to provide for the establishment of an administrative secretariat. The legislation is said to aim to protect individual title, rather than control what the professions actually do. This model is proposed because umbrella legislation is much easier to amend and the model is pro competition in that it protects title.

"Unregistered professions will eventually be brought under the umbrella scheme although there is no intention for them to become registered. upon a complaint being substantiated, would be ... the power to stop the individual from practising in the particular profession." (NSW Health Care Complaints Report pp 54).

Recent Events

In 1997 the AASW Board of Directors once again committed the Association to pursue Registration. The impetus emerged mainly from New South Wales where the Psychologists Registration Act was under Review.

It was also based on the outcome of the Wood Royal Commission because it was understood some people calling themselves social workers may have been named and the lack of regulatory mechanisms for counsellors had come under attention. Some progress had also been made in Queensland. The AASW state branches were asked to begin preparation of a case to be coordinated across Australia by the Registration Committee.

Since 2000, with a change of several state governments and some shift in national policy, registration has again become a focal point. As a result of a decision of the AASW Board of Directors in June 2001, state branches have begun preparing to pursue this issue with their respective State governments.

The WA Branch has recently met with the Minister for Community Development, the Hon Sheila McHale, as well as the Attorney General, the Hon Jim McGinty, where the issue was discussed in broad terms and support sought for placing registration of social worker by title on the legislative agenda. Both meetings were very productive in terms of what now must be done to pursue this.

Many professions are registered as a method of reinforcing and maintaining quality service and practice. Social workers are powerful as they impact on and influence human lives, both in an individual and collective sense.

Registration would:

- keep social workers very accountable and ensure that professional practice standards are met;
- protect the recipients of the service and provide a course of redress if the client believed that they had been inappropriately dealt with;
- require social workers to maintain knowledge and competencies. (It would therefore underpin CPE, professional development, as evidenced by the accredited social worker status.)
- ensure clear delineation of standards and expectations;
- by title, ensure that only qualified social workers use the title; (There are people who call themselves social worker, or claim to be "doing social work", when they are not.)
- provide equity of access to social workers in private practice in terms of the health rebate; and
- by title, not contravene the National Competition Policy.

Summary

In summary there are some hopeful signs that some state governments, including the new Western Australian Government, are worried about the unregistered health professions in relation to:

- the lack of effective disciplinary measures available; and
- the lack of an effective means by which the public can assess their competence.

Quite a few of the documents mentioned above demonstrate that if these sorts of concerns are great enough then National Competition Policy issues can be overcome. Registration by title would assist with this, as well as provide:

- generic complaint and disciplinary mechanisms;
- a uniform code of conduct; and
- entry criteria agreed by the profession.

Conclusion

Much is yet to be done. The Professional Practice Committee of the AASW (WA Branch) has undertaken to coordinate Branch efforts to achieve registration by title, as well as liaise with other State Branches. Extra assistance, if only by discussion through email, would be welcomed from any member who would like to assist with this task.

Members wishing to become involved should contact the Vice President (Ethics and Professional Practice), Brian Dodds, on 9301 3648 or email bjdodds@bigpond.com

Full-Time Temporary Social Work Position

This is a full-time temporary position for a 6 month period commencing in January 2002. The successful applicant will spend an equal amount of time at both the Whitford Catholic Primary School and St Simon Peter Catholic School, catering for students from kindergarten to Year 7.

This person is an integral part of the school's overall pastoral care arrangements to assist parents and teachers to develop appropriate strategies for meeting the students' social and emotional needs.

Duties include service to students, parents, staff and school community. Casework and groupwork skills, a good understanding of parenting issues and the ability to work with families are required. Experience in schools is desirable.

Applicants must hold a Bachelor of Social Work qualification, have a minimum of two years graduate experience in social work, preferably in a child/family agency and be eligible for membership of the AASW and be supportive of the objectives and ethos of Catholic education.

Applicants will be required to submit a current Australian Federal Police clearance and a full curriculum vitae, including the names and contact numbers of three referees, one of whom must be the current employer.

Contact the School Office (9401 4224) for an application package. Enquiries to the Principal at Whitfords Catholic Primary (9401 4224) or the Principal at St Simon Peter (9301 6888).

**Applications close October 22nd, 2001 to -
Principal, Whitford Primary School, PO Box 81,
Hillarys WA 6023.**

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

SOCIAL POLICY ISSUES

RECENT BRANCH ACTIVITY

The Branch has seen a busy few months of activity on Social Policy issues and has:

- prepared a submission on the Review of the Forensic Case Management Team in the Prison system;
- Letters to the Editor of *The West Australian*, although not published and various Ministers about -
 - gay law reform,
 - children's issues
 - promotion of the Office of Commissioner for Children's Rights
 - recent terrorist disaster in America calling for a peaceful and just solution to this violent event and for Australians to react appropriately rather than vilify ethnic or religious communities;
- meetings with Ministers Sheila McHale and Jim McGinty
- participation in the Drug Summit, recent Family Forum, Homelessness Taskforce and attending briefings in relation to changes in the Department of Justice and Department for Community Development; and
- currently contributing to consultation processes in regard to major changes in the Department for Community Development and the Personal Support Program being introduced by the Commonwealth Dept for Family and Community Services.

As all the members of the AASW contributing to these processes do so as volunteers of the WA Branch in their own time it is timely in this Year of the Volunteer to thank them for their contributions and representation of your views.

NATIONAL ACTIVITY

I hope that Western Australia members of the AASW have noticed the Association becoming more active in national social policy over the past 18 months. Through written submissions, appearances before parliamentary inquiries and committees, media releases and the development of strategic alliances with other organisations, I believe the AASW is starting to be seen to be a worthwhile contributor to social policy debates in Australia.

One of the things that makes the AASW's voice distinctive and valuable is that it is informed by a wide membership base. When I was working on the submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry into the Education of Boys it was great to have input from around 80 members working in a range of fields. A number of members told me about programs they had developed to address the difficulties boys often present with, in schools, and the Inquiry Committee members were so interested in one of those programs they invited the AASW back for a second appearance so they could hear more about it.

I'm sure that there are many more social workers out there who are doing fantastically innovative things in many different practice areas. And there are even more of you who have a great depth of knowledge and years of practice wisdom that should be shared with the wider community.

A large part of my role is to tap the knowledge, experience and creativity of the membership in ways that don't require too much effort by members (I was a coal face worker until quite recently and I appreciate how hard it is to muster the extra energy that voluntary work requires).

My primary means of doing this is by email. I am constantly expanding my email lists so that when an issue needs a quick response (eg "bed brokerage" in private hospitals, changes to guardianship legislation, new data on breaching rates of Centrelink clients etc) I have a way of tapping that expert opinion quickly. Also people on my lists get to hear of media releases and other activities much more quickly than is possible through other means of communication, such as the National Bulletin.

So, this is a request to any WA members who would like to contribute to AASW national social policy work to send me an email with just a few lines describing the social policy areas that you know about; perhaps through practice experience, perhaps through research, perhaps through study. However it is that you know what you know I'd like to add you to my lists!

Sarah Hordern, National Policy Officer

Email: sarahH@asw.asn.au

BRANCH RESPONSE TO TERRORIST ATTACKS IN USA

Following a recent request from some members for the AASW WA Branch to make a statement about what was occurring in Australia as a result of terrorist activity in America a call was made for donations to buy space in the newspaper if we were unable to get a Letter to the Editor published or media release taken up. We were overwhelmed by the support and thought you might like to hear some of the views expressed too.

"I write strongly supporting your decision to make a statement in *The West Australian* on behalf of the AASW calling on the Australian people to seek justice as opposed to revenge and calling on individuals and groups to not target their distress on attacking people in the community based on their ethnic or religious background."

"The Australian government leaders' (viz John Howard and Kim Beasley's) gung-ho statements - presumably on behalf of Australian citizens - certainly need to be redressed."

"Thank you for organising this ethical response on behalf of AASW members."

"It's a very serious situation and anything we can do to promote appropriate and caring expression by groups and individuals in response has my support."

"I do not think putting an ad or some other similar public statement is a useful or effective use of resources and energy...There is still other aspects of the whole issue, and American/western countries response to be revealed. Thus quick responses will miss some of the bigger issues, eg limitations of military response and resultant flood of more refugees etc etc."

"Thanks for giving me the opportunity to do something practical in the face of the horrors of the past week."

"Thanks for taking this initiative."

IFSW STATEMENT ON THE TERROR HITTING THE USA

The community of social workers around the world expresses its profound shock and horror at the events in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania. The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) and its membership express our sincere grief for the victims and our deepest sympathy to the American people and other nationals having lost their dear ones. Our thoughts go to our colleagues in the National Association of Social Workers and in particular its New York City Chapter, their families and loved ones.

What we have witnessed is a tragic culmination of a world-wide escalation in tension over a number of months and indeed years. The positive work towards an effective peace process in a number of regions has been placed at even greater risk.

Acts of terrorism can never be condoned and those responsible carry with them a moral responsibility that never can be eradicated. However at these very times social workers world-wide will join in a plea for a reasoned and non-violent response to such an atrocity, and that the actions ahead seek justice but not revenge.

At this point it appears that thousands of innocent people may have lost their lives - and the lives of their families and loved ones will be changed forever. It is critical that in responding to this that the actions of any government - but most particularly the American government - do not lead to a similar loss of innocent lives elsewhere in the world.

Above all we appeal to individuals, groups and governments, not to exercise any judgement on any particular nation, ethnic group or culture. Terrorism and wars are the products of individuals and groupings with a distorted view of power and its use. Their behaviour cannot and must not be attributed to entire communities who share a common background.

The IFSW condemns violence in all its forms and in all places. We extend our deepest sympathy to those affected by this act of terrorism and those in the past. As a part of the international, national and local communities we stand ready to work with colleagues to seek reasoned and peaceful solutions to international conflict which leads to such atrocities.

Our colleagues in the United States in particular will, along with other professions, play a vital role in the recovery process. The international community of social workers stands ready to assist in whatever way it can.

IMELDA DODDS, IFSW PRESIDENT

TOM JOHANNESSEN, IFSW SECRETARY GENERAL

12 SEPTEMBER 2001

Letters

Joe Harding and Helen Fleming were this year's recipients of the remote practitioner scholarships made available by the WA Branch as a part of the Branch's commitment to provide service and support to our rural and remote practitioners and continuing professional education.

**Executive Officer
WA Branch**

Dear Meredith

I would like to thank you and the AASW (WA Branch) for granting me the remote practitioner's scholarship to attend this year's State Conference, *Social Work in the Market Place*. It was doubly pleasing to see that you were able to provide for another colleague to attend the Conference from an even more remote location than mine.

Stretching scarce funds as far as they can go is a well-established part of social work practice these days, and clearly the WA Branch are key exponents of the art!

I would also like to thank my employer, Family and Children's Services (Karratha) for allowing me to attend and my colleagues in the office who uncomplainingly filled in for me while I was away. Not compulsory they do so, but very nice that they did.

Hopefully, I will be able to diffuse some of the positive energy and ideas gleaned from the Conference to them, though quite how I could faithfully summarise the gamut of themes and presentations over three days is a little beyond me! However, if coerced to do so, (say over a second beer at the Karratha International Hotel!), it would go something like this.

The attractions of a new-look social work, sexy and confident in the market, are many and varied and, in some ways, can be seen as an inevitable development of where we as a profession are heading. But, be warned, not all that glitters is gold! Or rather, it is not gold for the people we as social workers seek to serve and engage through empowering relationships. Our new, endorsed private fees will probably protect us, but is that the limit of our vision: self-empowerment?

Be careful to ensure that the fundamentals of our profession come along at every step of the way. These fundamentals are, of course, such things as social justice, equity and respect, and opportunity for all peoples, and the building of caring and supportive communities (to name but some of the keystones of our profession).

Arriving at our new destination without these values would, I think, be a very lonely and isolating experience, and one a lot of people would regret. Roll with the changes, by all means; use the market place fully, for sure; but keep the faith strong and keep working for those people and communities the marketplace conveniently ignores!

Thanks once again Meredith and the WA Branch for facilitating my attendance and I look forward to catching up at the next one!

Warm regards,
Joe Harding

Continued on page 8

Net Watch

<http://www.nyu.edu/socialwork/wwwrsw>

The World Wide Web Resources for Social Workers website is jointly sponsored by the New York University's School of Social Work and the Division of Social Work and Behavioral Science in the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

It is an elegant site which is easy and efficient to use as it utilises very few images, in preference to multi layered text menus. The site boasts that it has more than 55,000 links and provides users with two options for searching for information. The first of these would be used by those with a specific interest in the following listed areas:

- government
- higher education
- journals/newsletters
- professional associations;

- reference/search; and
- social work.

The other option is to use the site's built in search facility. This works particularly well, as it provides the possibility of search by keyword, by title, by author or by clusters of words within text.

A good test of these types of sites is how well and frequently they are maintained. This site seems to have committed sufficient resources to ensure that links keep up with the constant changes and revisions that occurs in accessing online information.

To illustrate how well this site performs, a check was made to see if the site could identify resources to facilitate social workers and others assisting those affected by the destruction of the World Trade Center towers.

One such resource was the link to a site which will search by name for someone injured at the WTC location who had been admitted to a hospital in the New York area. URL: <http://147.208.4.54/wtc/search.asp>. (See below.)

This site is highly recommended and would be an starting point for identifying and obtaining social work related material.



Search for: Search

Advanced search

Match:

- Any word
- All the words
- Exact phrase

Search through:

- Link & category titles
- Link titles
- Category titles

Browse by category

[Government](#)
[Higher Education](#)
[Journals / Newsletters](#)
[9/11/01](#)

[Professional Associations](#)
[Reference / Search](#)
[Social Work](#)

WORLD TRADE CENTER VICTIMS WHO WERE TAKEN TO AREA HOSPITALS
Please enter the first and last name of the person you are searching for

The information contained in this Web site has been provided by hospitals in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area to the New York City Mayor's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) for the purpose of identifying those individuals who have been seen in area emergency departments in connection with the recent terrorist attack on the World Trade Center. The information is being provided to facilitate the location of individuals affected by the disaster. Attempts are being made to update the information at regular intervals. Given the disaster circumstances under which the information is being provided, neither the hospitals, OEM, nor Greater New York Hospital Association, which helped create the Web site, have had the opportunity to take steps to independently validate the information and are not responsible for any inaccuracies, misspellings of names, or incomplete information.

World Trade Center Victims Who Were Taken to Area Hospitals

Last Name:
First Name:

Search

This site provides information about patients who have been seen by New York-New Jersey area hospitals. If you would like to report a missing person, you can call the Missing Persons Hotline at (866) 856-4167.

**President
WA Branch**

Dear Barbara

My time in Perth was an enriching and informative experience. I loved being in the midst of energised, enthusiastic, committed people.

The material presented was relevant to the work I'm involved in, and the company was rich and varied. I'm especially grateful to the Association for providing this opportunity and special thanks to Meredith and Rosina who were extremely welcoming and hospitable.

Helen Fleming

CONGRATULATIONS CHRIS COOPES

Recently Chris Coopes, the AASW WA's Vice President Social Policy was acknowledged for his hard work to do with another non-government organisation ARAFMI WA.

At ARAFMI(WA)'s recent 25th Birthday celebrations they

presented Chris with a *Certificate of Appreciation* in recognition of outstanding contributions over the years to ARAFMI (WA) Inc.



The citation noted that Chris had made an "outstanding contribution as ARAFMI Vice President over several years and he was instrumental in the development of structural reform within ARAFMI and in the development of the Psychiatric Services Directory".

Invitation To Attend an Open Forum Presented by the

Children's Interests Subcommittee

"Fostering Resilience: The Alternative Story"

Thursday 25 October, 2001 at 5.30pm

Child Development Centre, 12 Rheola Street, West
Perth

The focus of the forum will be the preview of a paper by Jenny Terry based on her MSW research into resilience in children in out-of-home care. However, the subject matter has wider applicability to anyone concerned with issues around working with children. This paper will be presented at the 11th National Conference on Protective Behaviours in Sydney in November.

Light refreshments will be provided together with an opportunity for discussion and networking.

The Children's Interests Subcommittee meets on the last Thursday of every month at 5.30pm at the above venue. Membership enquiries can be directed to Jenny Terry – 9450 2031 (jterry@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

Mental Health Subcommittee Annual Report Supplement

Over the past 12 months, the Subcommittee has continued to undertake a number of activities through a small core group of members. From these we have begun to develop targets for future events and meeting structure changes.

One of the subcommittee's founding members, Lizzie Hill resigned during the year on her retirement from work. The subcommittee has missed Lizzie's commitment and wishes her well in the future.

One of our other subcommittee members, Kanthi Perera was recently acknowledged at the Social Work Awards for Excellence. Congratulations.

Activities undertaken

- Organisation and facilitation of the Dual Diagnosis workshop at the 2000 WA State Conference.
- In a joint project with the Education Subcommittee, Anne Barrett and Kanthi Perera conducted a training session for the subcommittee.
- Several meetings with the University Schools of Social Work have been conducted to discuss training needs of the field.
- The subcommittee prepared recommendations for the Branch to forward to the Metropolitan Health Services Board on issues relating to the restructure of Milpara Service and on competency based training
- Michele Speed as co-convenor represented the subcommittee on the Branch planning day.

Membership issues

- Regular attendance of all members is an issue and consideration needs to be given to the establishment of a category of a type of associate membership for those wishing to receive minutes only.

Direction

- Links are to be strengthened with National AASW mental health initiatives.
- There will be continued participation in providing advice and comment on issues affecting social work in mental health.
- A 12 month trial of changed meeting structure whereby each second meeting will become a brief education format to be open to all social workers.
- Continued regular contact with the University Schools of Social Work.
- Planning for the establishment of a small clearing house for subcommittee members of current mental health research and policies.
- Planning and conducting a one day workshop during 2002.

ANTHONY COLLIER AND MICHELE SPEED

Co-CONVENORS

TONY COOKE TO JOIN CURTIN UNIVERSITY

Trades and Labour Council Secretary Tony Cooke will join the staff of Curtin University after he leaves the TLC at the end of this year.

Tony holds a Bachelors Degree in Social Work and Masters Degrees in Social Policy and in Business Administration and will take up a two year fellowship in the Division of Humanities, and will be located within the School of Social Work and Social Policy. He will undertake some teaching and will also be involved in research, consultancies and community projects, across the Division of Humanities and also with the Curtin Business School.

In announcing his appointment, the Executive Dean of Humanities, Professor Tom Stannage, said "Tony Cooke is a distinguished West Australian with a wonderful record of concern for and service in community development. Curtin University of Technology is honoured that Tony has agreed to take up an appointment as Associate Professor."

Professor Jim Ife, Head of the School of Social Work and Social Policy, also welcomed Mr Cooke's appointment. "Tony Cooke is a high profile graduate of this School, who has shown that a degree in social work can be useful in many fields other than the traditional welfare sector" he said. "We are looking forward to his involvement in the School, as we know he has a lot to contribute both to students and also to our research and community projects."

CPE EVENTS

Holding It all Together: First National Conference for All Involved in Meeting the Challenges for Children and Families Where Parents Have a Mental Illness

21-24 April 2002 Melbourne

Call for abstracts.

Closing date for abstracts 15 October 2001 enquiries to PR Consultants email enquiry@prcc.com.au

(or Tel: Meredith 9332 0019 to be sent fax of brochure)



Expressions of Interest Fullness of Life Centre (Inc)

Expressions of interest are invited from suitably qualified and experienced professional practitioners (counsellors, spiritual directors and allied professionals) who wish to work on a flexible sessional arrangement, with their own clients, as associate staff members at the Fullness of Life Centre. The Fullness of Life Centre (Inc.), established in 1988, provides a confidential, professional service that promotes the personal and spiritual well-being of individuals, groups and organisations.

The Centre offers prospective practitioners:

- sessional rates, negotiated on an attractive per client basis;
- well equipped, soundproofed counselling rooms and group rooms, available for day and evening sessional bookings as required, seven days a week;
- convenient, central location (Hampden Road, Nedlands) with disabled access and use of photocopying facilities, bathroom and kitchen amenities;
- superannuation and insurance coverage (professional indemnity, workers' compensation, and public risk); and
- associate staff membership status and promotion of your services in approximately 10,000 widely distributed brochures per year.

For further information and application details contact:

Stephen Truscott, Director
Fullness of Life Centre (Inc)
37 Hampden Road, Nedlands

Ph: 9389 8550 Fax: 9386 4593
Email: flc@touch88.com.au

NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members

Aden Barker - Student

Karen Doiq - Student

Renee Drummond - Student

Margaret Hampton

Serenity Herald - Mission Employment

Samantha Jackson - Fremantle Hospital

Erika Jardine - Department for Community Development

Karen Lohse - Student

Suzanne Nash - Student

Tanya Pink - Student

Maureen Sellick - Student

Lesley-Anne Slattery - Wanslea

Brenda Taback - New Graduate

PASSIVE WELFARE

There is now a strong consensus against 'passive welfare'. This consensus is a key term in support for welfare reform in Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom, and in moves to replace so called passive forms of support with new provisions framed in terms of reciprocal or mutual obligations of state and citizen.

Noel Pearson has made the case against passive welfare more tellingly perhaps than anyone else. In *Our Right to Take Responsibility* (Noel Pearson & Associates, Cairns, 2000) he makes three charges against passive welfare payments: they are the tokens of a 'gammon' economic relationship of transactions lacking reciprocity; they enact a mode of governance that aims to manage marginalised groups at minimal cost; and they effect a mentality that fosters lack of responsibility in the recipients of its false benevolence.

Pearson's argument is very specifically addressed to indigenous people and indigenous politics, and even more specifically to the needs and circumstances of the people of the Cape York Peninsula. He makes no claim to generalise it beyond these particular circumstances. If the types of solutions he advocates are particular to indigenous communities, his critique nevertheless has far wider application. Rightly, it has found a far broader audience on both right and left of politics.

It is salutary to remember that other conceptions of welfare have been as attractive in their moment as passive welfare is unattractive in this one. Three come to mind.

Welfare as a social right of citizenship. On the coming of the British welfare state, T. H. Marshall argued that welfare support, along with education and personal social services, were an affirmation of the equal status and dignity of citizens who were unequal in class and economic position. Social protection from poverty in unemployment, disability and old age was a citizen's due. Marshall believed that the purpose of modern welfare was to enable those in need of help to remain full participants in the social community. The present notion that welfare recipients must be forced to participate is an odd reversal of Marshall's vision.

In Australia welfare rights have always been contingent ones. Unemployment benefits have always required their recipients to seek work. While payments to mothers, sole

parents and other carers have not been actively tested in quite the same way, they have always carried strong normative expectations. Such expectations are most visible in the payment of child benefits directly to the primary carer.

Welfare as compensation for diswelfares. In the 1970s Richard Titmuss argued that welfare served to compensate those who are adversely affected by economic growth and social change. There is some irony in attaching opprobrium to welfare as a 'gammon' economic relationship in the present period, when the cold war is over and global capitalism is all there is. The global era has seen the gap between the winners and losers in its economic transformation widen steadily. In Australia, there are presently some six or seven unemployed persons in competition for every vacant position.

Welfare as gift exchange among strangers. Titmuss also argued that welfare was part of a system of redistribution among citizens according to need, with the dominant form being redistribution over the life cycle and between generations. He likened this to the exchange of gifts in simpler societies, and saw it as vital for social integration. In contrast with the philanthropy of the past, he saw modern welfare arrangements as institutionalised sharing of need and risk. Rather than requiring something in return, he invited citizens to ask, 'Who is my stranger?' The trust and good will assumed in this vision cannot now be taken for granted. There is instead a demand for 'my' stranger to return the gift, in symbolic form at least, and to do so visibly and immediately.

None of these past visions speaks to the popular wisdom of the present that to get something for nothing is harmful to the recipient. Pearson makes a powerful case that the substitution of welfare for a place in the real economy has been deeply destructive for the people of Cape York. Those who advocate a new paternalism such as Lawrence Mead argue something similar. Yet present policy little offers welfare claimants little that might represent a genuine alternative to 'passive welfare'.

If the market is to be the measure, the reciprocity of mutual obligation and work for the dole are impoverished versions of exchange. The exchange of the market is an exchange of things of equal value in the eyes of those making the trade. There is no equivalent symbolism at the heart of mutual obligation, but a mean demand to render a sign of recognition that a return is owed.

Sheila Shaver

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