



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since I wrote my last President's report, it has been a tumultuous time both in terms of the delivery of services to clients and for the Branch.

In terms of the delivery of services to clients, a range of decisions have been taken that will impact on the delivery of services to clients – some of these positively, but, in my opinion, a significant number, can be viewed as impacting negatively both on the delivery of services to clients and in regards to the social work profession.

Positive has been the emphasis by the Gallop Government on a whole of government coordinated response to the delivery of services. There is no doubt that, in the past, agencies have been very territorial about responding to requests for services. Part of this no doubt is gate keeping in an environment where the resource base is inadequate.

Another component of this no doubt is a lack of understanding across agencies that service delivery is a shared responsibility, even in situations where there is one agency with statutory responsibilities involved in that service delivery. A whole of government response will no doubt enhance coordination and hopefully result in better service delivery.

Investigations by projects such as the Gordon Inquiry and various interdepartmental working parties in areas such as Sexual Assault, Service Delivery in Indigenous communities and the like also hopefully will have a positive impact.

I am particularly pleased to see the Gordon Inquiry call for the creating of an independent Children's Commission. This initiative, a long time in coming, will no doubt provide an independent advocate for children and the services they require especially when they are victims of child maltreatment.

However, other major decisions seem destined to negatively impact on service delivery. Take for example, the continuation of EDWA's policies that effectively eliminates social workers in public schools, the demise of the Principal Social Worker position at DSC, the elimination of social work qualifications as an essential qualification for most team leader positions at DCD and the merging of the Senior Case Work Supervisor's positions with those of the team leaders in the metropolitan area of DCD are just a few examples of the decisions that I believe will contribute to a decrease in the standard of services to clients in Western Australia.

I also believe that these decisions are part of a trend where professionalism and the requiring of professional social work qualifications is diminishing.

Additionally, while the Gordon Inquiry is also calling for greater resources across Government programs to target at-risk families, one must question the emphasis that is being placed solely on training. Training is designed to build upon the base line knowledge, skills and values/ethics that a person brings to the job. Without this baseline, which I believe comes from a sound generic social work education, training is just providing a person with a "cook book" for trying to do the job.

Training must be built upon that base line ability to understand the aetiology of what the issues in areas such as child maltreatment, mental illness, criminal offending etc. is all about. Training must be based on base line conceptual and analytical abilities, basic social work bottom lines like recording and documentation skills, the ethical commitment to accountably etc. I am not saying that people with "good hearts and good intentions" don't necessarily possess some or all of these attributes, however what I do see across the entire sector is a lack of appreciation of what a social work qualification contributes to the delivery of services. The empirical evidence in areas such as child welfare is quite clear - social workers do it better!

Part of that lack of appreciation is our own fault as a profession. I don't think we've been good at convincing ourselves about

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Issue	Deadline	Posted
October 2002	20 September	7 October
November 2002	18 October	4 November
December 2002	15 November	2 December
February 2003	17 January	3 February

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

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WA BRANCH HOME PAGE

<http://westausaasw.highway1.com.au/>

Printing by On Printing

Advertising rates (GST included)

Full page	\$195
Half page	\$110
Quarter page	\$66
Eighth page	\$50
Pre printed A4 insert	\$88

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The West Australian Social Worker is published monthly by the WA Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers (ACN 008 576 010). Articles, letters, opinions, enclosures or any other materials published in or included with the newsletter do not represent AASW policy. The Branch does not endorse or favour any service or organisation appearing in or included with this publication. Contributions are accepted on the understanding they may be subject to editorial revision.

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Continued from page 1 the valuable of the evidence based skills, knowledge and abilities we bring to the delivery of services. In not being confident ourselves as to what important contributions we bring, we as individuals and as a profession have not been good at articulating what it is our profession and we as professional social workers bring to the delivery of human services.

So what can we as professional social workers do to address this? First of all, I am pleased to say that the Branch is actively pursuing the issue of registration for social workers. Currently the Branch is finalising its position paper on registration, drawing heavily on the paper developed in New South Wales by Imelda Dodds.

Once this is done, it is my intention to seek appointments for myself and the Vice Presidents, Ethics and Professional Practice and Social Policy with all Ministers and Shadow Ministers who have portfolios relating to the delivery of social work services.

The purpose of these meetings will be to seek their support and assistance to introduce in parliament, legislation enabling the registration of social workers. This will follow on from meetings that the Branch COM has had with these Ministers and Shadow Ministers initially when the current Government came into power.

Another strategy that the Branch has used effectively and will continue to use is to respond to calls for submissions that impact on the delivery of social work services and to have a strong articulate voice in inputting in these areas. The Branch is also striving to be pro-active in the social policy area by bringing a range of issues to the attention of Government and non Government Departments.

Since we have been fortunate enough to engage a part time social policy officer for the Branch we have been able to have a much greater "strike" rate at responding to requests for comment as well as giving notoriety to issues as a Branch to help focus Government in these areas. These responses have been superbly informed by the Branch Sub Committees and members at large. Thanks to all of those who have contributed. Also you would be aware that, also with the help of our social policy officer, we are having a much greater profile in the media.

I have just recently written to the General Secretary of the CPSU/CSA asking that the AASW/WA and the Union meet to discuss how we can work more closely together to be a stronger voice. We are also looking to have similar discussions with WACOSS.

But the Branch and the Committee of Management and the officers of the Branch can't do it alone. It is up to each of us as professional social workers to speak out where we see decisions being taken that we believe will negatively impact on clients and where we see our profession being devalued.

Each and every one of us has an ethical obligation to ensure that we advocate, in a constructive way, for the best possible outcomes for our clients, to advocate for adequate resources and to ensure that structures and programs will provide quality professional service delivery. That is one sure way that we, as social workers, will truly "make a difference." I hope all Branch members will join the Branch's Committee of Management and the Executive in taking on this responsibility.

In terms of the Branch, at the last National Board meeting in Canberra in June, the Board of Directors took a decision that they would like all monies held by Branches, including the money

Branches have raised themselves and which Branches hold in reserve for funding specific services to members at a Branch level, placed in the Association's consolidated account.

Branch money will still "belong" to the Branch but would be held centrally to help address the Association's annual cash flow problem. In my capacity as a Director, I proposed that, given the significant impact that this decision potentially has for Branches, that the Association consult with Branches as to their position on the matter. In responding to that consultation, the Branch Committee of Management has conveyed to National that the COM's preference is for Branch reserves to remain with Branches rather than being placed in a consolidated account. You will find a copy of the COM's response else where in this newsletter. The full text of that letter provides the COM's rationale for its decision.

It's not much longer now - just less than a month until this year's 21st Annual Branch State Conference will be upon us. We have a unique opportunity this year for a much expanded conference as the WA Branch has been fortunate to combine with AASWWE to host in conjunction with the state conference AASWWE's national conference. This means a much richer and fuller programme and one that can occur only every 10 years when the AASWWE conference is in Perth!!

Commencing on Sunday evening, September 29 with a range of book launches and conference welcome right up until the closing workshops on Wednesday, October 1st you will be treated to more than 80 stimulating and challenging sessions.

Of particular interest will be the Tuesday "official" opening of the AASW/WA part of the Conference. The key note speaker will be Alison McClelland from LaTrobe University who is former Director of the Brotherhood of St Laurence. Also on Tuesday, a panel, "Whose Rights are They - What about US?" will be presented with speakers such as Archbishop Barry Hickey, A/Equal Opportunity Commission, Moira Raynor, Karen Healy, University of Sydney, and Shirley Bennell, Director of the South West Aboriginal Medical Service.

This year's conference dinner will feature Tony Cooke as speaker as well as music to dance the night away with. Students from the three universities will be providing entertainment throughout the conference and once again we'll be treated to the Speaker's Corner that has been a great success in the last two conferences. For those of you who enjoyed last year's art exhibit, this year you'll be treated to a photographic exhibit.

I'm sure the entire conference is an opportunity you don't want to miss. If you haven't bought your ticket, now is the time to do so. Don't miss this opportunity to hear an outstanding range of workshops, papers, and presentations, network with your colleagues and just generally have a good time. See you there!!!

I also draw to your attention that in line with the motion passed at the special general meeting held by the Branch in relation to the Association's Green Paper, that the Branch has entered into an agreement with Social Services Training Inc, whereby the funds from the state conference (and for a variety of Branch CPE activities) will be managed by SSTI. This is a similar arrangement to the one the Association has for its National Conference.

Again, I look forward to seeing you at the joint conference. It's an opportunity you won't want to miss!

DR. BARBARA J. MEDDIN MAASW Acc
PRESIDENT

OBITUARY: BARBARA EVANS 1908-2002

Barbara Evans was born in Peppermint Grove, Western Australia, served in the army in hospitals in Perth, Northam, New South Wales and Moratai Island during World War II. She gained a Diploma in Social Studies from the University of Sydney in 1954 and joined the Social Services Department (later Department of Social Security) in 1956, retiring in 1973.

Barbara was a member of the Australian Association of Social Workers from 1954, was a WA Branch committee member 1955 to 1966 and Branch Vice-President in 1958 and 1962 to 1965. She was the Federal Council Delegate for WA in 1959 to 1960 and in 1966 she served on the Accreditation Committee.

Together with Nell Williams, Marjory Hill and Teddie Stockbridge, Barbara lobbied for the establishment of a department of social work at the University of Western Australia. She believed it necessary to establish social work education in the State for the profession to remain relevant to its client base. Barbara was made a life member of the AASW in recognition of her contribution to the social work profession and to the Association.

The following is the eulogy given at Barbara's funeral on 25 June 2002 at St Luke's Church, Mosman Park by Marie Hobbs.

I met Barbara 45 years ago when I went to work at the then Commonwealth Social Services. She was my boss. It was a blessed beginning to my life in Western Australia because I had just married, had recently qualified, and knew no one outside the family circle. I am truly honoured to speak of Barbara because I was offered, as were many other younger people, mentoring and friendship and loving support from this glorious and cheerful person.

Barbara enlisted in the AIF in September 1942 and within a month had been promoted to Captain. She served overseas and was in Moratai when peace was signed and where she remained until she returned in October 1946. She spoke often of the responsibility of care she had for the women in her unit and perhaps it was this broader life experience during the war that led her to find her vocation in Social Work. Barbara trained at the University of Sydney. She studied and worked there for about ten years, before returning to Perth.

Barbara had what could be described as a compassionate realism in her approach to social work. She had a clear vision of what was possible and a complete lack of "them and us" in her thinking and interactions with people.

The Commonwealth Social Services administered sickness, invalid, unemployment and other special pensions. Our constituency was spread across the whole state, and was made up of the disenfranchised who were most often living on the fringes of society, such as Allawah Grove, Coolbellup and Moore River; in psychiatric institutions and in prisons. There was it seemed a toothless system of enforcing child maintenance payments bringing great distress and humiliation to families. To all these problems, Barbara brought clarity of vision and a determination to pursue all avenues of help.

There were very few trained social workers and it was an important time of attitudinal change, with the old ideas of what was best for others giving way to providing people with support to help themselves. It is easy to forget that at that time there were no useful psychiatric drugs; there were many war widows and women whose husbands had been changed physically and mentally by their war time experiences; it was socially unacceptable and economically extremely difficult, if not impossible to be a single parent.

There were wards and hospital verandahs filled with ex-service men with intractable illnesses and the consequent long-term effects on families. Then there was silicosis in miners and of course tuberculosis. Many of Barbara's colleagues and friends from that time are here today. Paddy Foley I saw on the way into the church.

Barbara was very much part of this time of change. She worked tirelessly towards the establishment of a Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Western Australia and was the first person in Western Australia to be elected an honorary member of the Australian Association of Social Work. This was in recognition of her long service to the profession.

Michael and I always rejoiced in seeing Barbara and Meg at the Art Gallery openings and I don't think Barbara ever missed an opening of my exhibitions! Her loyalty touched me very much.

Barbara lived on the river and near the sea - both were part of her blood stream. Until recently we frequently met Barbara and Meg on the beach in the early mornings - they of course were generally leaving as we were arriving. All who have known Barbara have recognised a grand person in her beauty, her balanced wisdom, great enthusiasm for life, gentle strength and complete integrity.

NEW MEMBERS

The WA Branch welcomes the following new members

Victoria Cooke
Leonie Lewis
Shirley Lizza
Tracey-Leigh Murdoch
Annette Schlafrig
Jill Ward
Deborah Woodbury

Barbara Evans (on right) at Branch event

Net Watch

<http://www.hrw.org>

What does Human Rights Watch do?

Human Rights Watch (HRW) conducts regular, systematic investigations of human rights abuses in more than 70 countries around the world. It's reputation for timely, reliable disclosures which has made it an essential source of information for anyone concerned with human rights. It has a large collection of country reports accessible from its website catalogue that describe human rights violations, detail the causes, and provide recommendations for how to end the abuses.

Through field investigations and an extensive network of sources around the globe, HRW recently examined human rights violations associated with Taliban massacres in Afghanistan, the trafficking of Thai women in Asia, rape in US prisons, refugees in Sierra Leone, and ongoing conflicts in Indonesia, Macedonia, Colombia, Russia, and the Congo.

To conduct research, HRW sends members of staff to talk with people who either experienced the abuse themselves or witnessed it. Researchers also work with local activists and other experts, then write up the findings. Since its founding, HRW has published more than a thousand reports on more than one hundred countries worldwide. Its catalogue lists only those reports currently available, which it sells in an attempt to recoup some of the considerable expenses of research, production, and distribution. HRW addresses the human rights practices of governments of all political stripes, of all geopolitical alignments, and of all ethnic and religious persuasions.

HRW defends freedom of thought and expression, due process and equal protection of the law, and a vigorous civil society; we document and denounce murders, disappearances, torture, arbitrary imprisonment, discrimination, and other abuses of internationally recognized human rights. Our goal is to hold governments accountable if they transgress the rights of their people.

With its experienced staff of regional experts, lawyers, and linguists, HRW has the capacity to expose abuses on a regular basis and a worldwide scale. This ongoing effort makes a difference saving lives, stopping torture, freeing prisoners and helping to create the space for citizens to exercise their civil and political rights. HRW reports are unique, up-to-date, first hand sources of human rights information and are available individually or through convenient subscriptions.

HRW began in 1978 with the founding of its European division, Helsinki Watch. Today, there are seven divisions covering Africa, the Americas, Arms, Asia, Children, Women, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Europe and Central Asia. It maintains offices in New York, Washington, Los Angeles, London, Brussels, Moscow, Sarajevo, Tashkent, Tblisi, Hong Kong, and Rwanda. HRW is a fully independent, nongovernmental organization, supported by contributions from private individuals and foundations worldwide. We accept no government funds, directly or indirectly.

A recent example of the scope and impact of the work of Human Rights Watch can be seen in its response to a ruling on 19 August this year by a Nigerian court of appeal for the Sharia stoning sentence of Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman. This upholds the verdict of death by stoning for adultery, which social workers would regard as a cruel and inhumane application of Sharia (Islamic) law.

A press release by LaShawn R. Jefferson, executive director of the Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch made a plea for appeals for this sentence to be overturned.

"The legal system is being used to punish adult women for consensual sex," said LaShawn R. Jefferson, Executive Director of the Women's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch. "The death penalty is never an appropriate punishment for a crime, and, in this instance, the very nature of the crime is in doubt."

In March 2002, a Sharia court in the state of Katsina in northern Nigeria had sentenced 30-year old Amina Lawal to death for having engaged in sex outside marriage. The government used her pregnancy as evidence of her having committed adultery. Ms Lawal now has an eight month old child. Over the past year, some northern Nigerian states have increasingly applied Sharia law to criminal cases, among them theft and adultery. Consequently, Nigerian Sharia courts have ordered amputations as punishment for theft and death penalty by stoning for adultery cases. To date, no stoning sentence has been carried out.

Jefferson urged the Nigerian government to commute the death sentence of Amina Lawal and drop the criminal charges against her. Human Rights Watch, which opposes capital punishment in all circumstances because of its inherent cruelty, also urged Nigeria to end the death penalty and the prosecution of consensual sex between adults.

Appeals protesting the sentencing should be sent to the following:

His Excellency Olusegun Obasanjo,
President of the Republic,
The Presidency, Federal Secretariat,
Phase II, Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja;
Fax: 234 9 523 21 36 (press office)
Email: president.obasanjo@nigeriagov.org

His Excellency Kanu Godwin Agabi,
Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice,
New Federal Secretariat Complex Shehu Shagari Way,
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory,
Nigeria;
Fax: 234 9 523 52 08

Minister Alhaji Abdullahi Ibrahim
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
New Federal Secretariat Building
10th Floor, Federal Secretariat
Block 1, Wing 1-B, Shehu Shagari Way
Abuja, Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria
Fax: c/- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
234 9 523 0394/0210

Another example of the quality, thoroughness and credibility of HRW's investigative and research activities can be seen in its report on the impact on children whose parents have been imprisoned on drug charges in the United States.

The enormous cost of American policy, which justifies the application of harsh penalties as meeting the need for 'zero tolerance' in the 'War on drugs' is starkly shown in HRW's report *Collateral casualties: Children of incarcerated drug offenders in New York*. The following review by George Sanchez, "Seeking data on the drug war's child casualties," makes a convincing case for a rational approach to how this issue should be managed. (The full report is available as a PDF from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2002/usasny/>.)

With an estimated half-million American adults currently behind bars on drug charges, child welfare and prison reform activists have long warned that the War on Drugs is inflicting

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enormous collateral damage on tens of thousands of innocent bystanders: the children of prisoners. Now, for the first time, a new study attempts to determine just how many such children there are in at least one state.

Still, the statistics included in the study, compiled by New York-based Human Rights Watch, remain only estimates and the report underscores just how little data exists concerning the deeper economic, social and psychological cost of parental incarceration.

"This is a very low priority group inside of a larger low priority group on a national agenda," says Denise Johnson of the Center for Children of Incarcerated Parents. "These kids have not ever really counted for much."

The HRW study estimates that 23,537 children in New York alone have at least one parent serving a prison sentence for a drug conviction. Using data from a 2000 Bureau of Justice Statistics report, the study also estimates that nearly 125,000 children in the state have had at least one parent sent to prison for drug charges since 1980.

The data reinforce what child welfare and prison rights activists have long assumed, and while the report addresses New York alone, advocates argue the situation is likely to be similar in most other major states. Indeed, a 2000 study in California, commissioned by the state assembly, estimated that 856,000 minors, nine percent of the state's children, had at least one parent "currently involved in California's adult criminal justice system."

While the New York and California reports provide some evidence to better frame the debate, they are both hampered by the fact that no agency actually tracks precisely how many children nationwide lose a parent to prison. The federal Department of Justice, for instance, has been collecting a broad spectrum of data on state inmates since the 1970s. It was not until the late 1990s,

however, that it began looking into the numbers of prisoners with children and the best data it has remain estimates.

The Human Rights Watch report acknowledges that much remains unclear about how the incarcerations of a parent changes a child's life. For instance, there are no good statistics about how many children face a changed living arrangement as a result of the jailing of a parent. Moreover, while stating that child experts "agree that loss of parents to prison can be a continuing emotional trauma for children," the report also acknowledges that the evidence for such psychological strain remains anecdotal.

In most states, the question of what happens to the children of prisoners is often an afterthought at best. In California, for instance, Mike Van Winkel, a spokesperson for the state Department of Justice, says there is no established policy on collecting data on dependents at the time of arrest. While police officers have been instructed to call child welfare officials when processing prisoners, doing so is usually left to the discretion of the officer involved, Van Winkel says.

"For the most part, this population is a silent voice in the political world," says Gwynnae Byrd, a consultant on prisons hired by the California legislature. "We only think about the punishment side of things. We don't think about the domino, the ripple effect that it has on all other people who are affected when somebody gets arrested and incarcerated."

(Members might want to critically consider the State Government's announcement for assisting women in West Australian prisons as a result of a visit in August 2001 to Canada, Minnesota and England by the Minister for Justice and Legal Affairs. The Ministerial statement is available from <http://www.ministers.wa.gov.au/Speeches/A06/WomensPrisons.pdf>. The full report of Mr Mc Ginty's report is available at http://www.ministers.wa.gov.au/Feature_stories/GayLesbian/WomensPrisonsTrip_final.pdf.)

What the Branch Has Been Doing On Your Behalf In Social Policy

The WA Branch received an invitation to meet with Federal MP Nicola Roxon and discuss the "National Commissioner for Children and Young People" proposal. There was also an invitation to complete a response concerning the proposal. Members of the Children's Interest Subcommittee attended the meeting with Nicola and together we developed a submission on the Commissioner's proposal. National office also completed a submission with feedback from various interstate members. Electronic copies of both submissions are available.

The State Government has launched the "Health and Education Standing Committee Inquiry", which will focus on the "Role and Interaction of Health Professionals in the Western Australian Public Health System". As the Branch has already responded to a similar inquiry earlier this year with the "Allied Health Taskforce on Workforce Issues", details from this submission will be utilised.

Members of the Committee of Management met with Executive Officers from the Osborne Division of General Practice to discuss a journal article on social work. The Division is doing a series of stories on allied health professionals and social work has been highlighted as one of the professions to be focussed on. The article outlines what training social workers undertake, professional standards, provision of services and referral procedures.

Finally, important days in 1-7 September are National Child Protection Week and the 11th International Day of Peace.

KATHY BLITZ-COKIS, SOCIAL POLICY OFFICER
blitz-cokis@inet.net.au

RURAL SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

Postgraduate scholarships worth up to \$2,500 can be applied for by country allied health professionals. 7 scholarships are available to country allied health professionals wanting to undertake postgraduate studies in 2003.

In a media release the Minister, Sheila McHale said the scholarships would be awarded to people willing to commit to 12 months' continued employment within a public sector country health service.

Closing date 20th September 2002.

Application packages can be obtained by contacting Suzanne Spitz at the Department of Health on 9222 4484 or email: Suzanne.Spitz@health.wa.gov.au.

Letters

Dr Barbara Meddin
President, WA Branch (AASW)

Dear Barbara

I am writing to express my appreciation to the State branch for the Social Work Award for Excellence that was presented to me June this year. It was, as I said at the time, somewhat overwhelming and I'm sure that I did not say everything that I wanted to on the evening, so I wished to pass on a few thoughts now.

I really appreciated for myself the acknowledgement and validation of my work by my social work peers that the award represents. Thanks to the Branch for organising these awards.

I also appreciated the acknowledgement and award for the two groups that I represent, being workers for the Department for Community Development and rural workers. I think that the special issues facing both these groups are well known. My working experience has been that there are many dedicated workers who are committed to working with our clients, despite the difficulties. I do really feel that these groups were also validated by nomination.

I also wish to congratulate you on the evening itself. I know I had an enjoyable and informative time.

Regards

Janet Rapkins
8 July 2002

Dr Barbara Meddin
President, WA Branch (AASW)

Dear Barbie

Thank you for your letter dated 6 June 2002 expressing the concerns of the Australian Association of Social workers regarding the abolition of the Principal Consultant Social Work position within the Disability Services Commission. While I do appreciate the various concerns that you have raised, I would like to assure you that the Commission is committed to maintaining the quality of services it provides to people with disabilities and their families.

The decision to discontinue the position of Principal Consultant Social Work was made following an extensive review of the roles and functions of the principal consultants within the Commission. All professional staff in the Commission were given opportunity to input into the review. The review carefully considered the various functions and best management alignment of the work of the five principal consultants in the areas of social work, clinical psychology, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech pathology.

The implementation of the recommendations of the review will ensure that key professional functions required by the Commission will be endorsed by Corporate Executive and be realigned into directorate operational structures.

I am confident that the realignment will not impact upon the quality, access and provision of social work services for the consumers of the Commission. I believe the outcomes of the

review are also consistent with my previous commitment to the Association regarding the Commission's intention to maintain the continuation and integrity of social work services.

The review has highlighted the importance of maintaining clear policy and program support within the areas of care and protection, guardianship, legal issues and release of information. With this in mind, resources will be dedicated to these areas to ensure quality of policy and processes within the Commission.

Please note that all substantive principal consultants have been transferred to new roles, ensuring a high degree of continuity. For example, Ms Linda Kazazi (formerly Principal Consultant, Social work) will be transferred into the new position of Services Resource Consultant. The number of senior positions requiring professional qualifications has been maintained.

I appreciate that senior staff may have some anxiety regarding the implications of the review on their own workloads should additional roles be realigned to them. A thorough planning process is in place to manage the transition of key roles including the implications and impact upon staff.

All resources previously attached to the principal consultant positions have been maintained and will be invested back into operational structures to support the realignment of the key roles and functions. I also note your concerns regarding supervision of senior staff. I am aware that these issues are currently being addressed with the senior officers to ensure that their specific needs will be met.

I appreciate that you have taken the time to alert me to the Association's concerns and would like to reassure you that the Commission has an ongoing commitment to quality professional services for people with disabilities and their families.

Yours sincerely

Dr Ruth Shean
Director General, Disability Services Commission
4 July 2002

Ms P Margaria
Children's Interest Subcommittee
WA Branch (AASW)

Dear Ms Margaria

Thank you for your letter dated 2 July 2002 regarding early childhood education within the new organisational structure for the Department of Education.

The current changes to the organisational structure within the Department are a result of recommendations made in the Investing in government schools: Putting children first Task Force report.

The report was based upon a consultative process where all stakeholders had the opportunity to present their views on the effective use of resources and services to maximise achievement of student learning outcomes. The new structure is designed to encourage the development of a seamless curriculum as outlined in the Curriculum Framework.

Early childhood education will be strengthened through its inclusion as a phase of schooling within the Curriculum Directorate. In addition, each Executive Director and Director of other departmental areas has the responsibility to plan, provide resources and monitor implementation of other initiatives to support the early childhood years. This will ensure that early childhood education programs are supported and developed to meet the learning needs of young children.

I agree that it is important to create strong advocacy for early childhood education to ensure that sound philosophies underpin the learning programs across the early childhood phase of schooling from kindergarten to year 3.

Early childhood education will be stronger for having the advocacy of all Directors with a commitment to ongoing improvement of the education of young children.

I am confident that through these changes Western Australia will continue to provide a high quality learning environment for children in the early years of schooling.

Thank you and your committee for raising your concerns with me.

Yours sincerely

Alan Carpenter MLA
Minister for Education
8 August 2002

Children's Interests Subcommittee
WA Branch (AASW)

Dear members

Thank you for your recent letter to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, the Hon Larry Anthony MP, concerning the UN special Session on children. The Minister has asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Special Session presented the delegation with a unique and energising opportunity to raise awareness of children's rights and provided a framework for addressing the needs of children. Australia's primary approach to the Special Session was to focus on achievements to date and practical strategies for overcoming difficulties and addressing new issues that have been identified since the 1990 Children's Summit.

In this context the Australian delegation took an active and positive approach to the development of the outcomes document, A world fit for children. The document focuses on the four key priorities of promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting against abuse, exploitation and violence and combating HIV/AIDS. The document is available on the UNICEF website at <http://www.unicef.org>.

As you will be aware, policy in relation to immigration is primarily a matter for the Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Philip Ruddock MP. The Government is concerned for the welfare of all children in detention and is committed to meeting its obligations for the care of children in immigration detention centres.

I understand that Dr Ozdowski hopes to report on the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's inquiry into children in detention centres by the end of this year. At this point it would be premature to prejudge its outcome.

Once again, thank you for writing. I trust my comments have been helpful.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Gibson
Chief of Staff
12 August 2002

The following letter is in response to the National Association's proposal to centralise all Branch monies into a central national account.

Ms Jo Gaha
National President
Australian Association of Social Workers

Dear Jo

I am writing to you on behalf of the Western Australian Branch Committee of Management to offer comment on, and to express our concern over, the financial Management discussion paper you recently distributed.

First, let me state the WA Branch Committee of Management agree with the comments in the paper that there is a need to "identify a financial management policy that will work for the greater good of the entire association" and that there is recognition that one way of doing this might be to rationalize the existing bank accounts. However the Western Australian Committee of Management doesn't believe there has been enough open and accountable discussion on the various ways that this might be done.

It is our belief that it is incorrect to state that the 'subject of this discussion paper does not affect the rights of Branches nor the way in which finances are distributed'. As a Committee of Management, we feel that the implementation of these proposed recommendations would not only limit the choices and options available to each Branch but would, when combined with the current financial practices of the National Board, contravene Clause 8 (h) of the Branch By-laws by effectively stopping any discretionary disbursement of monies raised within that Branch.

Whilst we are aware that the Board of this Company has ultimate control over all the financial resources of the AASW, it is our feeling that the degree of separation allowed by a second bank account provides an ability to negotiate the allocation of Branch funds as part of the annual budgeting process.

As is pointed out Clause 8 (h) of the Branch By-laws states:

The Branch has the power on behalf of the Association to raise or earn money and disburse money so raised plus capitation fees received.

However, under the system being suggested, all such funds would be required to be deposited into the Diamond Account and as Branches are currently stopped from dispersing their own funds without obtaining permission from the National Board, these funds would thus not be available for use at the Branches discretion. As well, the paper talks of placing surplus monies from the Diamond Account into long term investment. This would further remove the possibility of the Branch using funds raised by its members in a specific or discretionary way. Surely other options that might be worked within the spirit of the Branch By-laws can be sought?

This issue is particularly pertinent to the Western Australian Branch as we have a geographical disadvantage, which means that very little CPE, professional support, or professional interaction can occur without incurring very high telecommunications or travel costs. Yet no allowance is made for this when capitation is apportioned. As a result, the WA Branch has continually undertaken to raise additional funds that can be used specifically to support Western Australian social workers (in line with clause 8 (h) of the Branch By-laws).

In short, these funds have been raised by Western Australian social workers in the belief that the money would be used to support Western Australian social workers. The current proposal is antithetical to such initiatives. As a result, we believe that any limitation to the financial choices and options available to the

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Branch would impact heavily on the way the Western Australian Committee of Management can provide appropriate and adequate services to its local members.

On a broader level we feel that if the Board takes responsibility for the total investment policy, Branches will lose the ability to decide the types and styles of investments that they feel would suit them. For example some Branches may decide to forego a higher interest rate in order to invest locally, ethically or in 'green' investments.

We believe that the loss of these choices and options would be a major disincentive to individual Branch fundraising efforts.

For some time the Western Australian Committee of Management has been voicing concerns similar to those defined by the paper. In a letter addressed to the last National Board meeting the WA Committee of Management voiced concerns about the day-to-day operating processes of the Association at the National level and the need for much higher levels of working capital.

On these issues, we would agree with the discussion paper that there has been a lack of ability on the part of the CEO to manage the finances effectively. In our earlier correspondence we have already pointed out that:

- we are concerned that there appears to have been no attempt to 'protect' the AASW's seasonal cashflow situation through some form of accrued funding.
- we are concerned that, even though additional funds have been quarantined from membership fees National Programs appears to be requiring larger injections of funds to offset the cashflow shortfall that occurs between March and June each year.

- we are concerned by the fact that this year there appears to have been a serious lack of forward planning about projected expenditures in that the initial additional funding requested was not sufficient to cover the actual expenditure between March and June.

In relation to this current initiative, we note that you have taken great pains to point out that the Association is not in financial difficulty but, rather, has had an issue with the way the finances are managed on a day-to-day basis. However, there is no suggestion in the paper that the cashflow issues for National Programs will be any different for the current year.

This raises the concern that if all funds were placed into this centralized account and in September surplus funds were removed for long-term investment, by March we would be suffering the same current cashflow difficulties and without the current separate funds, the Association would most certainly be returning to the situation of obtaining a costly overdraft facility.

The WA Committee of Management opposes placing all the Association's funds in a centralized account. Before we would be comfortable in agreeing to such a plan, we believe a review of the current financial processes needs to be undertaken and a process created whereby it can be guaranteed that this cash flow situation will not continue to occur.

Finally, we would like to comment on the statements that the 'Association currently needs significantly more working capital than it needed in the past and that the Association will be requiring a far greater injection of reserve funds in order to host the 2004 IFSW/IASSW International Conference'.

As everyone is aware, the recent membership fee increases were designed to help offset the higher level of expenditure required. We are also aware that at the time of these increases a new formula for capitation saw a larger amount of the fees quarantined for National programmes and usage. The National surplus stated in last year's budget indicates that these changes have been enough to ensure sufficient funds to operate both Branches and the National programmes.

Therefore if these funds are managed well there should be no need to rush into a new centralized finance system before having a chance to fully assess its costs and benefits to both the National body and the Branches. In this same vein the additional funds required for the 2004 IFSW/IASSW International Conference can already be obtained through specific negotiation with the Branches. To initiate these changes without following a process of consultation and discussion is likely to be interpreted by membership as another attempt aimed at centralization of the Association and limiting Branch autonomy.

It is our feeling that based on the above mentioned concerns, at this stage to shift to a monopolized central banking system without exploring alternative options and having an open and accountable discussion would be inappropriate and would not be in the best interest of the members of this Association.

Yours sincerely

Norma Welsh
Vice President for Finance

31 July 2002

Cc: CEO, National Directors, Branch Presidents

NB: This letter has been written at the directive of the Western Australian Committee of Management and is signed for and on behalf of this committee.

To the National Board of the Australian Association of Social Workers

On behalf of the Western Australian Committee of Management, we the office bearers are writing to you to express our concern over the financial situation of the National body of the AASW.

As you are aware the Western Australia Branch have again been asked to shift funds out of their investment accounts, into the National operating account. This has been requested due to the seasonal cashflow problem that appears to have been occurring at this time of the year for each of the past three years.

This situation has raised some concerns for our Committee of Management.

- As a body, we are concerned that there appears to have been no attempt to 'protect' this seasonal cashflow situation through some form of accrued funding.
- The Committee are also concerned that the amount being requested each year appears to be increasing, even though additional funds have been quarantined from membership fees.
- The Committee are also concerned by the fact that this year there has been not one, but two requests for top ups. It has been expressed that this indicates a serious lack of judgement about budgeting and projected expenditures.

The WA Committee of Management is aware that a membership based organization like the AASW needs to maintain a 'reserve fund' to be able to ride the wave of having high income early in the year followed by almost no income in the latter part of the year.

We are also aware that that the National AASW body does have such a reserve and that this money is locked away in financial arrangements that do not allow it to be used to help cover the cashflow problem. The Committee acknowledges that if some of these reserves were held in a more 'fluid' state they might earn less interest and so the National budget might be reduced to some small extent.

This 'seasonal cashflow' problem has been an issue over the past three financial years and our recollection was that we were initially assured that the problem had occurred as part of the changeover to the accrual accounting method and that it would be a short-term issue.

We also believe we were informed that other options (such as overdraft facilities) would be explored by the National Board. However it appears that over the past two years there has been no attempt to allow funds to accrue in, or for, the operating account from early in the year, so that money is available to cover the normal outgoings that occur during the period of almost no income in the latter part of the year.

In view of the \$44,000 surplus in the last financial year it is difficult for us to understand why some of this money was not held in a more 'fluid' form so that it could be available to cover the current seasonal shortfall.

The Committee also have the belief that part of the rationale for the recent membership increases and the recent increases in the quarantined amounts held by National was that this additional money would be used to minimize any seasonal cashflow problem.

Again it is difficult to understand why some of this additional revenue has not been 'held over' to assist with current expenditure.

In light of this last point, the Committee is also concerned that the amount being requested each year appears to be increasing even though, as stated, additional funds have been quarantined from membership fees.

Finally, as stated the Committee is concerned by the fact that this year there have been not one, but two requests for top ups. It is felt that this could indicate a serious lack of judgment about budgeted and/or projected expenditures. To the untrained eye it would appear that the basic income in this period would be from some pre-organised advertising and pre-arranged Direct Debit membership fees.

In this same way, it would appear that the basic expenditure of wages/salaries, and set costs could be predetermined. With this in mind it is difficult to understand how a calculation in March /April could be so far off the mark that wages in May could not be paid without a further \$20,000 injection of funds. We were extremely concerned by this statement in your letter and believe that it is untenable that the AASW, as a national professional association, allows this situation to continue.

As a result of these concerns the WA Branch strongly recommends that the National Board of AASW take immediate steps to rectify the financial issues, as outlined above.

These steps should include measures such as:

- Encouraging more members to use the Direct Debit system so there is a more even revenue stream throughout the year. This would be a useful way of 'protecting' against the seasonal cashflow situation. through some form of accrued funding
- Using some form of accrued funding in order to maintain sufficient National financial reserves in a more fluid form, so as to cover any seasonal cashflow issues that may occur.
- Ensuring that Branches such as WA, are not inconvenienced by such demands, which does result in additional time and effort being put in by both the local staff and this committee, and also detracts from Branch activities. It is important to recognise that these reserves were built up through the endeavours of Branch members in order to provided additional services to WA Branch members.
- Ensuring that the annual budget is developed in such a way as to allow a reasonably accurate prediction of income and outcome through any given period. This would result in more accurate requests being made in the first instance, if funds were still to be required at any stage.

The Western Australian Committee of Management would request that these issues be addressed by the Board and that a timely response be offered, in writing, to our members.

This letter is signed for, and on behalf of the following office bearers:

Norma Welsh, Vice President – Finances.
Chris Coopes, Vice President - Social Policy
Brian Dodds, Vice President - Professional Practise & Ethics
Anne Pickard, Vice President – Education
Richard Wilkins, Secretary
Dr Barbara Meddin, President

August 2002

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETINGS

Children's Interest Group

last Thursday of the month at 5.30 pm
State Child Development Centre
Building No. 12 Rheola St West Perth
Contacts: Pippin Margaria Tel: 9481 2203 &
Ann Cutler Tel: 9249 4988

Administrators in Health

First Wednesday of the month at 4 pm
Social Work Dept, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
Contact: Amanda Humphreys & Jill Hawkins Tel: 9346 4666

Aged Care

Third Wednesday of the month at 4.30 pm
City West Lotteries House
2 Delhi St, West Perth
Contact: Penelope Mogridge Tel: 9346 6000
Ivy Vukovich Tel: 9272 5983

Mental Health

Third Wednesday of the month at 4.30pm
UWA House, Hackett Drive
University of Western Australia, Crawley
Contact: Kanthi Perera Tel: 9381 9055

Continuing Professional Education

Third Thursday of the month at 5.30 pm
City West Lotteries House
2 Delhi St, West Perth
Contact: Convenor Anne Pickard Tel: 9229 2610
or CPE Project Officer Meredith Doyle Tel: 9332 0019

LOCUM REGISTER

Team Leaders/Managers/Employers!

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contact Meredith at the Branch Office.

Tel: 9420 7240

Fax: 9310 3936

email: aaswwa@highway1.com.au

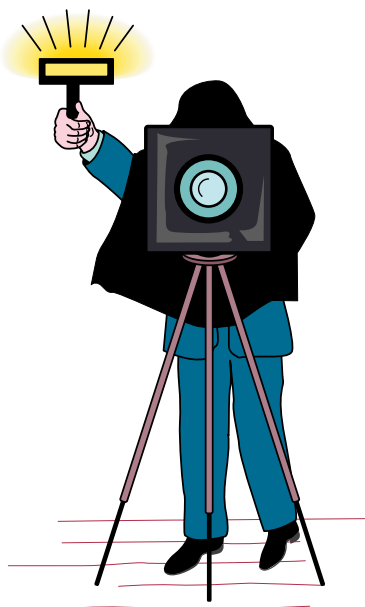
STATE CONFERENCE NEWS

PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION

Expressions of interest are sought from social workers and human service professionals interested in displaying their photographic art at this years joint AASW (WA Branch) and AASWWE conference "Working Across Borders" being held in October 2002.

To register your interest and for more information contact:

Cindy Gorton
Conference Project Officer
Tel: 08 9244 7797
Email: JonandCindy@bigpond.com



INTERESTED IN MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?

In a recent visit to WA Professor Robert Bland, Convenor of the National Mental Health Interest Group, asked to hear from any members who were mental health practitioners and who might be interested in contributing to ongoing debate around issues as they arise eg for media statements, policy comments, submissions to National enquiries, practice standards.

Social workers in the mental health area are invited to consider becoming part of an AASW special interest group. The purpose of the group would be to promote quality practice in this exciting field. The need for such a group has emerged from the rapidly changing context for practice, evidenced by such developments as

the National Mental Health Plans
the Mental Health Practice Standards
beyond blue initiatives
primary care initiatives including the proposal to allow GP access to AHP services.

These are dangerous times for social work. We are competing to promote the concerns of social work in an increasingly competitive and hostile context. Within these dangers there are also great opportunities. We need to be informed, proactive and vigilant. We need to work collectively and to support each other in our efforts.

The structure and membership of the interest group needs to be developed, but I am anxious to hear from social workers that would be interested in joining the group to plan for the future.

Are you interested in contributing to an email group or to comment on a range of mental health issues as they arise?

Please contact Robert Bland by email robert.bland@utas.edu.au or phone 03 6324 3946 to register your interest.

CPE EVENTS EVALUATION FEEDBACK FORM

Been to a Branch CPE event and had wanted to fill out a feedback form but were not able at that time? Do not despair! You can now go to the WA Branch website where you can fill out an online form! Click on the CPE events button and navigate to the form.

The form has drop down menus, the first being the names of recent CPE events. It is very easy to fill out - just select a choice in each menu. The online form has the same categories as the paper forms distributed at CPE events eg usefulness of material, depth and coverage of material, style of presentation, did the activity meet your training needs, comments etc.

