

WA SOCIAL WORK NEWS

September 2004

■ PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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AGM

The inaugural Annual General Meeting will be held on Monday 18 October 2004, at the Niche Association, 11 Aberdare Rd (corner Aberdare Rd & Hospital Ave) Nedlands.

The AGM commences at 6.00 pm, with drinks from 5.30 pm and will be followed by a buffet dinner (modest cost involved). Visit the website for further details, a form to RSVP for the buffet dinner. The guest speaker will be Commissioner Hammond, from the Corruption & Crime Commission.

RSVP by 12 October

Thought for the Day

New opinions are always suspected, and usually opposed, without any other reason but because they are not already common.

John Locke (1632-1704) An essay concerning human understanding, 1690, Dedicatory epistle.

Online Version

An online version of the newsletter can be found at

<http://socprofsocwkr.s.highway1.com.au>

The Society of Professional Social Workers is one year old!. The ground work of establishing a solid local representative professional body based entirely on the needs of its members has been accomplished. Your interim Board has worked tirelessly and voluntarily to attain this most important part of our goal.

At the forthcoming AGM you will be asked to vote for a democratically elected Board. There is more to be done and we need the commitment and contribution of time from our members to see our collective aims realised. That means joining with us, rolling up your sleeves and having the opportunity to feel pride in the contribution you make to WA's proud tradition of dissent when it matters. Acting local, supporting the practice standards which require Western Australians because of their distance from the east coast to be just that bit better. Board members have considerable fun together and enjoy the feeling of taking part in important Western Australian history.

We owe our interim Board a debt of gratitude and I mention Pattie Benjamin who has worked tirelessly, Greg Swensen for his commitment and uncanny ability with computers, the wisdom and counsel of Mary Joyce who has taken on the job of Treasurer and Brian Dodds our vice President who has worked with Barbara Meddin to establish the locum register.

I also mention Karen Vincent with her clarity of purpose and steely determination to make the conference a winner and her co-convenor Cindy Gorton whose systematic and methodical approach provided equilibrium and the practical efficiency of Erlene Chun. There was also the conference committee and the wonderful student volunteers.

Emma White has brought a fertile approach and a younger mind and Roma Lewi a lifetime of professional experience and wisdom, and the quiet determination to do things with care and precision.

Anne Pickard and Paddy Glasgow have provided calm and comfort when we sometimes wondered if the task was beyond us and have

acted in the CPE area despite each having sick elderly mothers, my own experience giving me insight into the commitment that entails.

Our inaugural conference was an unqualified success. The venue was welcoming and appropriate for a conference of such moment. The unselfish efforts of all involved enabled attendance costs to be affordable. It is an underlying and important principle for the SPSW that all costs will be kept to a minimum and profits made in WA used here for the betterment of the profession.

The CPE programs have been extraordinarily successful in content, attendance and fellowship. We are recovering the enthusiasm of the past and again experiencing rewarding satisfaction in hard won outcomes.

There is still a lot to do. The society will continue with a program of annual conferences, it will continue to invest in ongoing education, it will continue to offer support to individual members and it will continue to offer fellowship. The profession's future is in the hands of all of us.

It is important for us to work together with the AASW especially in those national and international areas which concern us in WA. Unfortunately some of our attempts have stalled. Early this year we met with the acting National President who requested we submit to her our ideas on how the rift can be turned into a positive thing. This we did soon afterwards but as yet there has been no reply. The SPSW has written to the WA Director of the AASW about our involvement in the matter of registration but there has been no formal response.

We are anxious to forge a memorandum of understanding with the AASW. It is difficult to move forward without a commitment by both groups to a clear set of shared objectives and an ongoing dialogue in particular concerning ethics, practice standards, registration, entry standards and professional identity.

It is my firm belief that the constituent members of both the AASW and the SPSW must maintain pressure on their respective organisations to achieve outcomes for the social work profession which are congruent with the profession's values, and sustainable.

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In closing it has been a memorable year, with memorable achievements. The SPSW needs all its members to take an active part in our Society. The amount of help we each give will vary from time to time depending on our stage in life and the need to care for children, to study, to network and develop a career etc. We must simply put in what we can, and then reap the considerable rewards

I wish all our members a good and productive year, and look forward to seeing everyone at our AGM on Monday 18 October. The details are contained within this package and may also be seen/downloaded from the website. This will be a great party – ours always are - and apart from the importance of the event and our very able and interesting speaker, there will be a ripping good dinner afterwards!

See you there!

BRIAN WOOLLER

TREASURER'S REPORT

Like any small business, our first year of operation has been characterised by a steep learning curve, while we have established financial protocols, built up banking relationships and developed general operating rules for management of the Society's financial accounts.

We chose to use Bendigo Bank as our service provider, in line with our theme of supporting those at a local community level. Their personal approach and local knowledge has been extremely helpful.

We are currently in the process of having our accounts audited and details of these will be

Accessing the Website

As our membership continues to grow it is our intention to regularly distribute a hard copy of the newsletter to all members when it is published. However, as the SPSW must live with the reality of limited resources, the newsletter & notice of events will be distributed electronically.

If a member does not have email access please notify the Secretary & alternative arrangements will be made so that materials can be sent to you.

available at the Annual General Meeting on 18 October 2004.

In broad terms however, we are very pleased with our achievements in our first year of operation, with a health account balance of \$7,577.32 at 30 June 2004. This has been achieved through an increasing membership base and a very successful conference.

We have acted to minimise costs so as not to burden members with unnecessary and costly infrastructure. Our main financial cost is the purchase of professional indemnity insurance for our members, the smaller fixed costs are related to our ISP for our website and GPO box office usage.

We have sought to provide discounted rates to all members at our functions and CPE events, only ensuring that our costs are met.

The year ahead will see us refine and streamline our financial processes particularly in relation to monthly membership fees.

I would particularly like to thank all the people who have volunteered hours of their time to develop our accounting processes. This includes Norma Welsh and Brian Wooller who did the initial set up work, Greg Swensen who maintains members details and provides the tax invoices and Pattie Benjamin who maintains the linkages between the bank, the SPSW and members.

MARY JOYCE (ACTING TREASURER)

CPE REPORT

Members are Anne Pickard, Emma White, Cathy McIntyre, Kat Etherington, Mary Joyce, Pattie Benjamin and Paddy Glasgow.

The advent of the SPSW brought experienced erstwhile AASW CPE committee members to the SPSW and Emma, Cathy, Kat and Pattie are more recent. We are hoping other members will join us.

It has been an extraordinary year operating independently from the national body and able to make our own decisions as to content. The (small) profits are with us in WA for member services and we are accountable only to our members.

The structure of the CPE management group may be found on the website. We have not fully achieved it and have learned that this takes longer than we thought. We hope in



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Frith Hart
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*From May 1, 2004 the General Social Care Council (The UK registration authority) will also evaluate applications from persons who have social work experience, but who do not hold formal social work qualifications.



2005 to get close and you are warmly welcome to join us.

Being part of the new Society has meant that whilst our keenness is great our resources are not. Thus a decision was made that all events for the year would be of wide appeal and promote practice excellence.

Barbara Meddin has workshopped job getting skills for recent graduates and Estelle Blackburne, Tony Cooke, John Button and Brett Christian comprised a panel discussing *Buttonholing justice – the story behind broken lives*. Sabina Leitmann chaired a forum for members and guests re our services and the future of SPSW and Professor Richard Harding reviewed the first three years of inspecting custodial services in WA and scanned the future.

Breakfast with Hon Julie Bishop, Federal Minister for Ageing was arranged especially for a large number of social workers in aged care for 13 July but postponed by her at short notice. Plans are underway to reschedule the event very soon.

Speakers and events were of particularly high standard, audiences were large and enthusiastic and enjoyment over wine and our excellent suppers afterwards allowed time for networking and further discus-

sion with speakers. The next event will be *Passing the baton* on 27 September where the experiences of recent graduates and those about to graduate will be shared with experienced practitioners in a panel/forum format and Barbara Meddin will again hold her seminars for graduating students. Further information from the website and from flyers that follow.

Your Society needs more keen people for the CPE group, ie you! If you have an interest in ongoing professional development – and who has not? – please contact Pattie for more information.

PATTIE BENJAMIN

■ PRACTICE IN HEALTH

The SPSW is rapidly building a strong base of members with practice interest in health related issues. The SPSW is represented on two significant bodies, which provide a voice for allied health professionals they are the Combined Health Professions Association (WA) and the Allied Health Peak Body Project Team.

The aim of the latter group is to establish an Allied Health Peak Body in WA, a recommendation from the Allied Health Task Force, which was completed in 2003.

The SPSW has been active in other roles – eg promoting patient access to inpatient mental health facilities. The SPSW lobbied in relation to the proposed closure of psychiatric units at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and Royal Perth Hospital. The Government has now reviewed this decision and it will not proceed in the foreseeable future.

The SPSW has written to Mr Tony Abbot, Federal Health Minister, regarding the new Enhanced Primary Care Program, under Medicare for allied health services. The SPSW is lobbying for members in the mental health area to obtain a registration number from the Health Insurance Commission in order to access the Medicare rebate and receive referrals from general practitioners. It also requested Mr Abbot to endorse social work as a stand alone profession across all health areas, particularly the aged sector and not just be confined under the general heading of mental health worker.

In August the SPSW met with Ms Julie Bishop, Federal Minister for Ageing in regard to addressing the members on her vision for aged care. As noted in the CPE report plans are underway to reschedule this event.

The SPSW has also written to Dr Neale Fong (responsible for implementing the 2003 Reid Report for WA health) requesting the actioning of Recommendation No 57 of that report. This is to establish a senior allied health position in the Department of Health. We eagerly await the outcome.

At the SPSW conference in May 2004 a group of social workers interested in the issues and practice of social workers in health met to discuss areas of interest and a future interest group.

From this group, Carolyne Wood a senior social worker at Sir Charles Gardiner Hospital has taken the position of chair and is keen to hear from members with issues and ideas of how to further promote social work practice in health. Carolyne can be contacted on 9346 4666 during work hours, or via e-mail - Carolyne.Wood@health.wa.gov.au.

MARY JOYCE

Mentors For New Grads

Experienced practitioners are invited to become mentors for recent graduates as part of a SPSW program to support new members. **Contact Pattie Benjamin 9381 9496**

social workers



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STATE CONFERENCE 2005

The time has come to start planning the 2005 SPSW Social Work Conference. Paddy Glasgow and myself are co-convening and our first goal is to gather around us an inspiring team of conference planners. We ask you to consider joining our planning group either as an ongoing group member attending planning meetings or to come onto an email group to provide ideas, comments and volunteer for a particular job during the conference planning and/or during the actual conference.

In order to progress the initial phase of the conference which is to develop the title and themes to produce a call for papers promotional flyer. Some early thoughts -

Conference Titles

- Social workers at work or social work at the coal face.
- Point of difference: Social workers as change agents, community builders, social activists.
- Social work roles: Global, national, local or civic, political, developer.

Website

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

Discussion group

<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/wasocialwork/>

Email

socwork@highway1.com.au

- Where do we fit?
- Best fit: The place of social work in human services.
- Creative practitioners: Social workers work.

Conference Themes

- Everyday social work practice
- Alternative social work practice
- Critical social work theory/practice
- Make a difference
- Reflective practice
- Think outside your usual social work perspective
- Learn something new in social work theory/practice
- Explore connections with related disciplines
- Meaningful social work research

We would like those of you who have the interest and time to add to these ideas and/or make other suggestions based on your everyday social work challenges and experiences so we have the most relevant and gutsy title and themes.

CINDY GORTON

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LETTERS

Dr Maria Harries
Director, AASW (WA Branch)

Dear Maria

On the 28 April 2004 I wrote to you suggesting that Brian Dodds represent the SPSW on the AASW group looking at registration. He was suggested as he is currently vice-president of SPSW and had a central role in the matter of registration when he was a member of the former AASW (WA Branch) committee of management.

It is my understanding that he met with Margaret Stockton about his involvement but to date has not been invited to attend meetings. Further to this it is disappointing to read your Branch newsletter and see no mention of the SPSW's willingness and preparedness to be involved in the matter of registration as a joint venture.

I have been reluctant to approach the Attorney General, the Health Minister or the Minister for Community Development separately because it is likely to either create some confusion or jeopardize the outcome. I would appreciate knowing what the current situation is as the SPSW is still committed to full cooperation in this matter.

Yours truly

Brian Wooller, President
9 August 2004

SPSW Book Club

The idea is that on a regular basis members of the group would meet and discuss a chosen book within a social work context. Books can be either social work texts, fiction or non-fiction. The aim is to create a forum where contemporary social work scholarship fiction and non-fiction can be discussed so that a richer knowledge and understanding can be obtained.

A meeting to discuss the SPSW Book Club will be held on Wednesday 22 September from 6-7 pm at 145 Hamersley Rd, Subiaco
Convenor Valerie Sollis.

RSVP: Valerie Tel: 9266 7982 or email: v.sollis@curtin.edu.au

Nibbles and drink provided