

# WA SOCIAL WORK NEWS

December 2003

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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### Thought for the Day

We are, all of us, moulded and remoulded by those who have loved us, and though that love may pass, we remain none the less *their* work - a work that very likely they do not recognise, and which is never exactly what they intended.

*Francois Mauriac, The desert of love*

### Online Version

An online version of the newsletter can be found at

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

On behalf of the Board of the Society of Professional Social Workers (SPSW) I wish you the compliments of the season. As we now enter the festive season or as some prefer to see it the "silly season", it is useful to reflect on what is the first six months in the life of the SPSW.

Prior to the mass resignation of the WA Committee of Management of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) a concerned group of social workers had established under WA statute of the Society of Professional Social Workers (Inc). This step was not taken lightly. It followed what had been a long standing battle by the WA branch to insure its autonomy and its concern about the long term financial viability of the AASW.

The AASW for some time had the use of 66% of membership fees with only 33% returned for branch use. This over the years had led the branch to find other ways of raising money to maintain its viability. It had a proud history of continuing professional education and development, a newsletter and web site of high standard and an annual state conference. All of this has now disappeared.

It is, however, pointless to either dwell in the past or bemoan what has happened. The Board of the SPSW is committed to move forward and ensure that the profession through the SPSW can re-establish its position in the professional community. To do this it needs the support of you all.

To date the SPSW has developed a web site, established a newsletter (web based), signed up to a comprehensive professional indemnity insurance, held two successful continuing professional education development events and is cur-

rently working on a state conference for 2004. None of this can be continued with the meagre resources available.

The two CPE events held since the last newsletter were *Buttonholing justice: The story behind broken lives*, with Estelle Blackburn, John Button, Tony Cooke and Brett Christian and a seminar presented by Barbara Meddin on how to go apply for a social work position. The presentation of this seminar marks the significance of SPSW being able to continue this important seminar series started by Barbara a number of years ago. If the SPSW not undertake this seminar it would have been unfair to the newly graduating social workers.

I would like to thank all of those involved in these events for their energy and enthusiasm. I do know that the "cake stall" is alive and well.

Without a substantial growth in membership the SPSW will not be in a position to continue. It must also be said that without a substantial membership base it probably has no real mandate to continue. It is important that social workers take pride in their profession and not allow further erosion through inactivity and waiting to see what might happen.

The SPSW was established with the purpose of making sure that a momentum continued and that local autonomy and action was not lost. This momentum can only be sustained by membership growth and volunteer commitment.

The Board of SPSW does recognise the difficulties associated with choice and it has gone to a great deal of trouble to establish merchant facilities to allow the payment of fees through credit cards.

*Continued on page 2*

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*Continued from page 1*

Our financial institution the Bendigo Bank does have difficulty in collecting monthly direct debit payments from savings accounts. You should note that it is less expensive for you to arrange direct debit through your own financial institution, remitting to the SPSW account with the Bendigo Bank.

Membership of the SPSW will accord you, professional indemnity insurance and free attendance at CPE events, discount to the conference and the opportunity of involvement in a truly open, democratic and locally controlled organisation.

I am aware that some of you have concerns about a national voice being lost with the SPSW. This could not be further from the truth. What may be lost in the short term is a national viable structure. The most effective way to get a national forum will be to rebuild the strength of the professional body in WA. This will lead to a reappraisal of relationships and hopefully provide a structure that will genuinely allow for local and global action to both occur. I believe the term is "glocal".

I would like you to read the letter from Robin Maslen reprinted in this newsletter which clearly supports the case for reform. Our reform agenda is not unique to Western Australia.

There has been considerable "murkiness" about the financial affairs of the AASW. The asset base has certainly been eroded and the decision (by only one vote) to cut expenditure by 15% a clear indicator that financially all is not well.

It is also believed that while the WA Branch of the AASW placed all its finances into the nationally agreed central account some branches ignored this company directive or were allowed to maintain separate accounts.

This goes to the core of the issues behind the need to have a completely State based and run professional body.

There are protections in State legislation which allow for greater autonomy and local accountability. It is a much more certain and predictable legal framework for a professional association than national corporations law. It also allows for more structural flexibility. The Corporations Law, under which the AASW operates as company by guarantee, imposes complex requirements on organisations and are increasingly more appropriate to business and business activity.

A major goal for 2004 is a State conference. It is one way for the profession to support its spectrum of views and to showcase the diverse range of skills and ways of working of social workers in our community. We are interested in hearing from you about format and content for this event, which in the past under the auspices of the AASW was always a premier occasion for social workers to share their experiences and find a voice.

I would like to thank all of those people, especially the Board who have worked long and hard over the past six months to ensure the continued development of the SPSW. I continue to admire the perseverance of Pattie Benjamin and Greg Swensen who have literally given up any kind of a life to ensure that this new and exciting venture is a success. While saying that I am mindful that the few cannot do it all. The SPSW needs you as I believe you need it.

A Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year to you all.

**BRIAN WOOLLER**

# Conversations on Social Justice

## CONVERSATION 3

### A View From the Ridge?

by Neville Watson

18 November 2003, Curtin  
University, Perth  
Western Australia

*Presented at Trilogy of Conversations on Social Justice. Conversation Three: Leadership for Social Justice. 18 November 2003. Curtin University, Bentley, Western Australia.*

In what I think was his last book, "A View from the Ridge", Morris West writes of feeling like a climber who, after a long and arduous ascent, has reached the high ridge of the range and now pauses to draw breath and look back. And as I looked back over fifty years of social justice activism, I soon found myself with a list of things I had learned over the years, and some stories to illustrate them. It was intoxicating stuff - things like 'never organise yourself around the media', 'follow your heart', 'the curse of perfectionism' and so on. And then I sobered up. As from the top of the ridge I looked forward to the land in front of me falling steeply into a dark valley, the real question became "Where lies my hope?"

And when I ask myself that question, I think of the statement of Robert Miller, a former Assistant General Secretary of the UN

*"I am moved by what is going on in our world today. Never before in the history of the world has there been a global, visible, public, open dialogue and conversation about the very legitimacy of war. Can it be, that even in these difficult times, we are in the midst of a world wide transformation in which more and more people are actually withdrawing their belief in war. Now there are two superpowers: the United States and the merging surging voice of the people of the world waging peace."*

I think of my time in the States ten days ago talking to five hundred students at Penn.

State University with them showing great interest as I spoke about peace.

I think of Michael Moore doing a tour to promote his new book and speaking to five to ten thousand a night, with Baltimore having four thousand pounding on the door unable to get in. His book went straight to No 1 on the best seller lists and a million copies were sold in three weeks. His comment: "There has been a real shift in public opinion. We will reclaim our White House."

I think of the people of Rumania, and Serbia, and Russia and countless other places where the people have said 'Enough is enough' and have changed the direction of their history.

Is this where the future lies, the merging surging voice of the people? Is this where my hope lies? I would like to think so, and I would never underestimate the significance of public opinion, BUT, and here comes my first contribution to our conversation :

The merging, surging voice of the people in itself is not enough. It is not enough to simply try and change public opinion.

Let me give an example. In 2002, seventy one percent of the people of Australia did not want war in Iraq and on the streets they made heard their merging, surging voice. And what was the response of the Prime Minister? "It is not going to change my mind!" to which some of us responded "What is so important about your mind? I thought that in a democracy it was the mind of the people that mattered!" How simplistic could we be? Despite the merging, surging voice of the people, we went to war.

Why did we go to war? It had, of course, nothing to do with terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, regime change or the liberation of the Iraqi people. Some would say, and not without good reason, that it was "in the national interest" - the precise words of the Prime Minister when the other grounds were cut away from under him. Was a free trade agreement the decisive factor? I don't think so. I think the real reason why we went to war is that John Howard is a

war freak. John Winston Howard believes that war maketh the man and the nation. He summed up his position at the dedication of War Memorial in London in these words "War plays the pivotal role in defining Australia's character as an independent, egalitarian, and confident nation", that is, for John Winston Howard the most profound expression of Australian character is in military endeavour.

Now you may disagree with my conclusion and I have no problem with that. The point I am trying to make is that although it is important to build the merging surging voice of the people, this in itself is not enough. Other factors are operating, and extremely important factors. And one such factor in Australia is the character and influence of a Prime Minister whom David Marr describes as "the master of the political art of deceiving without lying".

I don't know whether I agree. For me, to deliberately deceive is to lie. You see it all the time. Last Friday he said he had not seen the CIA report on Iraq, but he did not accept its gloomy assessment. This is his standard approach to intelligence, "Don't show me anything I don't want to see". The man literally is incredible!

My first point this evening is that over the last ten years there has been a significant change as far as working for social justice is concerned. It is not enough to simply develop public opinion. Seventy one per cent of Australia were against the war - and yet we still went to war - because of the operation of other factors. One of the real tasks of those advocating social justice today is to analyse, analyse and analyse until we start to see what are the real issues - and there to direct our energy and effort.

The second point I wish to make is related to the first: We need to consider new ways of working for social justice.

On my way home from Iraq I spent ten days in the States to meet up with two people whom I see as very important to the future of that troubled nation. One is my dear friend Kathy Kelly who has been

## Fingers in the Door

Careless for an instant I closed my child's fingers in the jamb. She Held her breath, contorted the whole of her being, foetus-wise, against the Burning fact of the pain. And for a moment I wished myself dispersed in a hundred thousand pieces Among the dead bright stars. The child's cry broke, She clung to me, and it crowded in to me how she and I were Light years from any mutual help or comfort. For her I cast seed Into her mother's womb; cells grew and launched itself as a being: Nothing restores her to my being, or ours, even to the mother who within her Carried and quickened, bore, and sobbed at her separation, despite all my envy, Nothing can restore. She, I, mother sister, dwell dispersed among dead bright stars: We are there in our hundred thousand pieces.

David Holbrook

## How To Join

Applications for membership of the Society are now invited. Go to the website, click on the membership page and download an **application form**.

If you are a current or recent member of the AASW, enclose a copy of your membership. Otherwise you will need to enclose a copy of your qualifications as outlined in the form.

Payment of fees is by two methods: annual fee (\$297) or by monthly direct debit (\$29.75).

If you want to pay by direct debit, download a **direct debit form**. The website has other information, including the code of ethics, the constitution and questions and answers.

nominated three times for the Nobel Peace prize but is never likely to receive it. At the moment she is under process for a \$10,000 fine for bringing medicine into Iraq during the sanctions. She has also spent a year in gaol for planting corn on a missile site and other gaol sentences for such things as crossing the line at the School of the Americas. We were with each other in Baghdad before and during the war.

Kathy has a brilliant mind and a commitment to social justice second to none - and the point I was sounding out with her is the feeling that we need new ways of acting. The Berrigan brothers, and the Ploughshares Actions were very significant in their day. What we need today are actions which will be as significant for our day and generation as they were in their day. Instead of repeating the old, what is the new thing that needs to be done at this time and place? I don't know the answer to that question but it is a question that needs to be asked.

It was much the same question that I discussed with Ray McGovern in Washington DC. He directs the Servant Leadership School of the Church of the Saviour in Washington with which I have been associated for a long time. Ray was in the CIA and was responsible for the daily intelligence briefings for George Bush Senior. In those days the CIA used to refer to Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wollowitz, and Armitage as "the crazies". Now he says "The crazies are in charge of the asylum".

A small group of right wing ideologues involved in the Project for a new American Century now control the country. Ray McGovern has had and is having far more influence than he recognises and I was bold enough to suggest that he should give consideration to spending the next twelve months working for regime change in the States.

The third point I wish to make is: There is a loss of truth in our society

Simone Weil speaks of truth as the most sacred of all virtues. She is right. I do not think that we recognise how fragile our society is with respect to truth. That which we took for granted as a value in the past is no longer such, and unless we challenge the lies our future is very bleak.

How far the situation has deteriorated can be seen in the incident of the Kurdish refugees on Melville Island. I found it almost

inconceivable that the government could in all seriousness say the Kurds didn't ask for asylum. The fact that the government tried it on is a sign of how far we are down the tube. Only an idiot would believe that they were not asking, for refuge - and that is part of the problem that so little is truth respected that we are treated as idiots.

Of the fiasco, Mr Howard said "It doesn't really matter." It does bloody matter! It matters for the 14 refugees and it matters for the integrity of our society. If it is the truth that sets you free, then we are everywhere in chains. We need to challenge the lies - and this is an essential aspect of social justice action today. Our Governor, Lt General Sanderson at least sees the position clearly. "My greatest fear is that we will succumb to that political spin that makes victims of both the media and the recipients of its products. If that happens it will be a miserable world in which to live".

Three new books hit the shelves this week, three very different books but with much the same theme - the lack of truthfulness in contemporary society. One is by Frank Brennan, *Tampering with asylum*. The second by Mike Moore, entitled *Dude, where's my country?*, is a hoot. In his inimitable way Mike Moore says that George Bush has made the Whitehouse the Home of the Whopper, and he goes through the menu. The original Whopper: "Iraq has nuclear weapons". The Whopper with French fries "The French are not to be trusted". The Whopper Combo "This is not just the US but a coalition of countries". This is Mike Moore's favourite whopper and he works through the coalition list in a hilarious manner.

The third book is by Don Watson and entitled *Death sentence: The decay of public language*. Watson maintains that the management sector has taken over our language and that all that their vacuous phrases do is to cloud the issue. He gives some classic examples and says that there is now "a paucity of public discourse" and we "seek truth in a language that has no truth in it". All three books point up the same issue - the lack of truth in contemporary society.

Don Watson also maintains that you cannot tell a joke in managerial gobbledegook, so let me conclude with a story that is making the rounds at the moment.

## WHAT IS COMMUNITY HOUSING?

BY ROMA LEWI

It is about a newcomer to heaven asking St Peter: "What are all the clocks for?" "They," said St Peter, "indicate the number of lies a person has told. That one over here is Mother Teresa's and hasn't moved at all. That one there is Abraham Lincoln's and has only moved once." The newcomer asked "Would it be possible for me to see George Bush's clock?" "No, I'm afraid not," said St Peter. "Jesus has it in his office and is using it as a circulating fan".

May God preserve us from a language that will not support humour. If that happens we are surely lost!

### MEDIA RELEASE

*Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre, media release, 25 August 2003 [www.uniya.org](http://www.uniya.org)*

Sister Patty Fawkner, the Director of Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre issued the following statement on the occasion of the second anniversary of the rescue of asylum seekers by the Norwegian boat, the Tampa.

It is two years since the 'Tampa incident'. In that time the Australian government has gone to war with the intention of offering freedom and a better future to the people of Iraq. In that time Iraqi and Afghan women children rescued by the Tampa continue to be detained on Nauru. For these nine women and fourteen children there is no offer of freedom and no commitment to ensure them a better future with their husbands and fathers who now reside legally in Australia.

Uniya, the Jesuit Social Justice Centre, is proud to be a signatory to the following open letter to the Prime Minister:

Dear Prime Minister,

On the second anniversary of the 'Tampa incident', we the undersigned call on the Australian Government to reunite the nine women and their 14 children who are in immigration detention on Nauru with their husbands and fathers in Australia. These men are on Temporary Protection Visas (TPVs) and we request that the Government permit the women and children to reside in Australia under the same visa conditions.

*Continued on page 6*

I am picking up on just one aspect of Dr Carmen Lawrence's excellent paper on the growing inequality in Australia, printed in the October 2003 issue of *WA Social Work News*.

Access to decent, secure, affordable housing is a fundamental underpinning of an egalitarian society. The lack of housing after the Second World War precipitated the provision of public or social housing. Many of us will remember that there were both successes and failures in the way that this type of housing was developed in Western Australia. During the 1970s and 1980s community housing began to emerge as an alternative to public housing. This was in response to concern being expressed by community agencies about the rising levels of poverty and the inadequacies of public housing, particularly a lack of tenant involvement in its provision.

In 1984 the Commonwealth government introduced the local government and community housing program. This program funded local government, community organisations and housing co-operatives to provide affordable housing to public housing eligible tenants.

The national housing strategy introduced by Brian Howe in 1990 acted as a catalyst to increased interest in the development of community housing providing greater housing choice for low-income households. By 1993 the community housing program (CHP) took the initiative further. Its aim was 'to provide tenants with a choice of location, physical type and management arrangements, security of tenure and an opportunity to maximise control over their housing in a responsive environment'.

### The providers and tenants of community housing

Today community-housing provid-

ers include indigenous organisations, housing co-operatives, large and small housing associations, church-based providers, local government authorities, crisis accommodation providers and other community service organisations. Tenants of community housing include seniors, people with disabilities, single parents, young people, Aboriginal people, migrants, people escaping domestic violence, people at risk of homelessness.

### The peak body

The Community Housing Coalition of WA (CHCWA) is the peak body representing and servicing the community-housing sector. Its basic funding is derived from the Department of Housing and Works (ex Homeswest). It is a very small and very hard working body representing the interests of the sector to government and promoting best practice among the diverse range of housing providers.

### Quality housing

Being personally involved in the management of a small housing association for people with disabilities, I know at first hand how it is possible to provide housing superior to public or private rental housing to people who can never achieve home ownership.

Housing and poverty are closely connected as was pointed out in the figures quoted in Carmen Lawrence's paper. If people are spending too much of their income on housing, they are trapped in poverty.

The tenants of community housing are entitled to Commonwealth rent assistance (CRA) unlike tenants in public housing. This means that a community housing provider can generate a reasonable income from rent whilst

setting a rent well below market rents for the area. Like with so many things, if you are not aiming to make a profit you have ample funds to do all things necessary to offer a quality product.

Maintenance is a huge issue in housing management. Good maintenance means quality housing and pride in one's home. Public and private rental so often entails poor maintenance. I also suspect that many people who have been lured into house purchase, which they really cannot afford, also face enormous maintenance problems over time.

### **There is not enough of it**

So, if community housing is so good why is there not more of it? The current figures are that 173 community and 62 local government organisations have been funded providing 3,300 dwellings across Western Australia. According to the strategic plan recently issued by the Department of Housing and Works the target is to increase the number of dwellings by 40% over the next four years.

Sadly, the initial generous funding, a grant covering the purchase of land and construction such as my association achieved has long gone. The Commonwealth government has retreated in its support, putting most of its funding to rent assistance rather than increasing housing stock. The State seems to be committed to the continuation of community housing provision but increasingly organisations must contribute funds in the joint venture program.

Also the Department of Housing and Works engages in stock transfer. This involves handing over public housing stock to a community housing provider or assisting in the purchase of existing houses.

This may increase the stock of community housing but it does not address a well-known fact that the construction of affordable housing has fallen behind need over recent years.

The most numerous occupiers of community housing are seniors. Local government authorities are mostly involved with this provision. It is other providers that tackle the more complex provision of housing to groups that need various forms of housing support, because of disability, mental illness or for various reasons, just not coping with life. It is this aspect of housing support service, which can be so crucial to success or failure as a tenant.

### **Important features**

There are some really important features of a community housing association such as the one I am involved with. It is small; a group of five houses. It is entirely run by volunteers, all living around the local community. Consequently our administrative costs are minimal. It has charitable status so it is exempt from GST.

Tenants are part of the management committee and all tenants are encouraged to come to all meetings. This is just one of the models. Another much larger organisation is Perth City Housing which operates a whole range of housing in the inner city area.

### **Community development**

Social workers should be on the look out for people who would benefit from community housing and make their needs known. I believe that there is not enough information flowing between likely prospective tenants of community housing and the community-housing sector. A group of people with like needs have achieved amazing things as evidenced by the co-op housing sector.

My association got going through the initiative of a parent, the local mayor and one of the disability organisations. You can get more information from the Community Housing Coalition of WA about what can be done. The demand for this type of housing needs to be more strident because in spite of its manifold success funding is not being maintained.

*Media Release: Continued from page 5*

These women and children should have been accepted as refugees because of the status of their husbands and fathers. As Australia does not recognise 'derivative refugee status' under TPV legislation, their claims have been denied and they have been held in detention on Nauru for 2 years now. Coming from Iraq and Afghanistan they now face either indefinite detention or the possibility of returning to a dangerous and uncertain future.

Family unity is recognised as a principle of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law. The family is acknowledged universally to be a fundamental unit of society. Significantly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious manner. What can be regarded as more important and compelling than guaranteeing a child the right to live freely with both his or her parents in a secure environment?

We believe that the Australian Government's denial of the possibility of family reunion under TPV legislation does not give effect to Australia's international obligations and we once again call on the Australian Government to reunite these families.

Yours sincerely,

Katrin Robinson, Acting National President, Amnesty International Australia; Howard Glenn, National Director, A Just Australia; Asylum Seekers Centre; Australian National Committee on Refugee Women; Kevin Liston, Director, Australian Refugee Association; Joe Collins, Secretary, Australia West Papua Association; Fr. Frank Brennan SJ AO; Julian Burnside QC; Marc Purcell, Executive Officer, Catholic Commission for Justice, Development and Peace; Dianne Hiles, ChilOut (Children Out of Detention); Ethnic Communities' Council of NSW; Hassan Ghulam, President, Hazara Ethnic Society in Australia Inc; Chris Sidoti, Human Rights Council of Australia; Elizabeth Biok, International Commission of Jurists; Gillian Deakin, President, New South Wales, Medical Association for the Prevention of War; Brenda Hubber, Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office; Mercy Foundation; Mercy Refugee Service; Missionary Sis-

# LETTERS

**Ms Jane Brazier**  
**Director General**  
**Department for Community Development**

Dear Jane

Thank you for meeting with me on Tuesday 21st October, when we discussed some of the circumstances and rationale for establishing the Society for Professional Social Workers (Inc).

As I mentioned, the SPSW enjoys a significant advantage, being a State constituted and operated body without the centralised financial and administrative strictures that of recent years have undermined the capacity of the AASW in WA. We are generating a great deal of good will amongst social workers here and interstate. The issue for us is to rapidly develop the membership base to support the maintenance and development of services for members which are up to date innovative and relevant.

Thank you for your generous offer to the SPSW to use the resources of the Department's intranet to disseminate information to social work staff throughout the State. Contact phone numbers are now part of our hard copy packages.

The enclosed CD ROM contains a number of documents, formatted as PDFs, which are suitable for uploading onto the DCD's server enabling staff to view or download these materials. On the CD ROM there are copies of the last three issues of the WA Social Work News (the SPSW's newsletter), an application for membership and a direct debit form, a copy of our Code of Ethics, a set of frequently asked questions about the SPSW and a brochure setting out membership issues.

Once again please accept my thanks and appreciation Jane for your time and interest, and for demonstrating your confidence in the new SPSW.

Yours most sincerely

Brian Wooller  
 President, SPSW  
 4 November 2003

**The Editor**  
**The West Australian**

Dear Sir

Reported in the West Australian on Wednesday October 29th 2003 'Magistrate Terrence McIntyre said "Since social Workers took over we've been going in the wrong direction" in response to a case brought before him of a man who beat his 11 year old son for 40 minutes with a 1.5metre length of garden hose.

Although His Worship is said in your report to have lashed out at social workers for teaching children more about their rights than their responsibilities it would seem that he is a proponent of the administration of lashings to any one for anything.

Mr McIntyre you are an anachronism of the 19th and early 20th century. There is no reason nor purpose other than flagrant sadistic pleasure in anyone beating another person for 40 minutes. The report states that you commented that the father went too far with his punishment. How far is too far? Would 30 minutes have been acceptable for an 11 year old to have been whipped on the backside and legs with garden hose?

From your privileged position all you can do is criticize social workers and demonstrate your ignorance of social work practice and of good parenting.

Brian Wooller  
 President, SPSW  
 22 November 2003

**Dear editor**

I have been a member since the 70's, once as a Branch President, but ceasing active involvement early 80's. My experiences include being the 'head' of two large voluntary organisations, one local one international. Work experiences include being a management consultant to private, government and voluntary organisations and in training managers in university accredited courses in leadership and management specialising in human relationships, strategic planning and change management.

Now I am back in the fold, and am responding to Jo Gaha's invitation in her Norma Parker address delivered at the

2003 ASW National Conference in Canberra September 2003, to "get involved in the conversation" about our association. I intend to focus on several process issues as I am ill-informed about much of the content of her concerns.

One could look at the whole of Jo's speech as a struggle to bring about change to a dying organisation. There are some authors who highlight important principles to follow in any organisational change process. Although most are related to corporations, I believe that they also apply to not for profit associations like the AASW. Jo mentions one author Kotter and one of the eight steps that he says organisational planners fail to follow, "Creating a Sense of Urgency". The other seven steps in his article ("Leading Change—Why Transformation Efforts Fail" Harvard Business Review Mar—Apr 1995) are "Forming a powerful guiding coalition—Creating a vision—Communicating the vision—Empowering others to act on the vision—Planning for and creating short term wins—Consolidating improvements and producing still more change—Institutionalising new approaches."

Plant in his little book *Managing change and making it stick*, Fontana 1987, highlights some important 'people skills' eg, Help individuals to face up to change emotionally—Gain energetic commitment to change—Get early involvement—Communicate—communicate—communicate—Woo the people and listen to them—Be responsive. Limerick & Cunnington in *Managing the new organisation*, Business & Professional Publishing 1993, list many other important factors, like power. One I think most appropriate in this current AASW scenario is that "The management of change is most effective when those affected by it are allowed to participate in the decision making".

My question to the AASW Board is "How many of these respected principles have been ignored and why? If, as I suspect most of them, then no wonder there is considerable unrest in the membership and reluctance to change.

Maybe the Board is deciding to follow a Dunphy & Stace model of change for large corporations that are situational. (D Dunphy & D Stace, *Under new management*, McGraw Hill 1992) In summary they suggest that the most major transformational changes in corporations in crisis in Australia have relied on dictatorial or coercive

leadership styles. Collaboration and Consultation leadership styles are reserved for fine-tuning and little changes where there is no urgency.

I am also aware of other common mistakes in the planning processes for introducing change. Decisions have already been made and consultation is just for show – Stakeholders are ignored – the time frame for the changes is too long – Too many goals are set and too many unrealistic strategies suggested. Do some of these mistakes ring true for the association's strategic plan 2001 – 2004?

In the matter of whether to be a corporation or an association I, and I assume many members, have no real understanding of the benefits of staying a corporation. What are the benefits? Surely we can be a National body that doesn't need to be a company. To "mirror the Australian political system" as Jo suggests is no answer. Why? In fact doesn't that system have large degrees of autonomy and power at Federal then State and then Local government levels with defined roles for each level? If one of the original reasons for a change from an association to a company structure was financial efficiency then something isn't working.

To use the Red Cross as an example is a bit ridiculous. That organisation is totally different; in short it is not an association for professional members. Jo says that her view to maintain a company structure is "supported by the current literature". I would like to read that literature and see how much relates to the goals and objectives of a non-profit voluntary association like the AASW. To imply that "accountability and self regulation insists we retain a company structure doesn't fit with the hundreds of non profit organisations who manage these tasks professionally.

There is no reason why company style accounting procedures can't be used in a non-profit association. It is with some that I have worked with. There is also no valid reason that "a unified approach" cannot still be presented with issues like the Code of Ethics, Accreditation etc. These do not require a company structure just a national body of some sort.

The debate about whether to remain an association or a company should be re-opened with the membership. What we now have doesn't seem to be working. This should

be discussed and debated by the membership. The stakeholders need a say. I (and the SA Ethics committee) was critical of another change that looks like being 'imposed' on the membership. That of centralising the ethics process. This review was done in a short time - on minimally researched data - very minimal member consultation – and what appeared to be foregone conclusions with limited options offered. My main frustration was that there was no member critical dialogue after the review findings were published and so the Board may just act on this.

Associations rely on a whole different set of interests and motivations to function. Just the words "company" – "corporation" – "association" conjure up very different images for each of us. Maybe we should call ourselves the Australian Corporation of Social workers? Whilst many members look for what they can get out of an association, I look for what can I give and in so doing get something.

Members are involved and collaborated with, they have a large input into policies and goals, they feel like they belong and can contribute to the well-being and direction of the association. Publications mirror this involvement. Conflict is resolved with healthy passionate dialogue and there are clear roles for the different sections at state and national level. The Board and the CEO exist to carry out the wishes of its members and not the other way around.

Corporations offer a product and sometimes a service, professional associations a service and sometimes a product. What is our product? The Journal, the Bulletin, Conferences, an Ethics Code, and the Insurance scheme. These are services to the members. Much of what Jo reports as achievements are directed at non-members, albeit on behalf of members.

Yes social work has that constant dilemma between trying to change society to meet individual needs and helping individuals adapt to society. Our association primarily exists to service its members/customers. If we look at quality management principles we see that the customer defines the quality of the service. How can we do that if not consulted? I wonder if the WA Branch actions are as a direct result of the Board discounting much of what I am trying to point out.

If there is a push to centralise many of the functions as it would seem to be, then the Board needs to explain and be open to dialogue about what if any are the benefits. It seems that decisions have been made without most of the principles outlined above being considered. Big corporations have learnt the hard way about centralisation and hence the phrase "Think Globally but Act Locally". They have realised that the more the power and authority for decision making is delegated to where the action is – at the local level – the more the staff will be motivated to find creative solutions and to offer suggestion for continuous improvements and new services/products. In short to be productive and happily involved.

What if any are the incentives for AASW members to be involved in the predicted centralisation of power, decision making and problem solving? "They can sort it out up there!!"

Finally, on the topic of 'there aren't enough volunteers' so we have to pay some one to do it. Maybe we are trying to do too much. We need to cut our cloth to suit our budget. This decline in social capital is common to all voluntary bodies. (sporting excluded). A decline that started with the advent of TV. It seems strange to me that with the ageing population the association doesn't know how to harness a growing resource potential of retired workers who would still like to feel useful and to share their knowledge and wisdom and get a great deal from mixing with younger workers.

Speaking from experience, I was recruited from the wastelands and now convene a committee, lead a couple of experimental mentoring groups for social workers, video educational seminars for country members, and am about to type up the local newsletter. If I can be recruited, how many others are there out there waiting to be approached. Running adverts won't work as well as face-to-face local contact. Clear expectations with time limited tasks and objectives would be a start. Then some appreciations works wonders.

See how groups of volunteers come together to put on great conferences. Jo refers to some of these experiences in '97 when the AASW was revitalised. Here is SA half the branch turned up at a breakfast, good responses to monthly professional education seminars, and a surprising interest in the mentoring groups shows it can be

done. Major effort put into keeping existing 'customers' is more efficient than just trying to recruit new ones.

Sometimes though, things just have to get uncomfortable before change will happen. Maybe we should just let the association run down until a revitalised need for something emerges. Bandiding and hope are not a good planning strategies.

To finish on a positive note, Jo offers suggestions. Having a smaller board with experienced members. An interesting challenge, to find the skills for a corporation amongst social workers? Have lots of chapters and sub branches. Sounds okay for support and meeting etc but what power and authority would they have on the association as a whole?

Have the company support the local groups. This I believe is the major role for the national body of a professional association. But the local needs to define the support needed. Sometimes offering support though, one needs to "teach others how to fish rather than provide the fish". National Professional education. Why? Jo invites members to give their ideas. A great offer if the decisions haven't already been made. Who would want to put their time and effort into suggestions when the decisions have already been made? Well I have had a go and taken the risk. I hope others will be encouraged to do likewise.

**ROBIN MASLEN**

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ters of Service; James D Thomson; National Education and Advocacy Officer, National Program on Refugees and Displaced People; Christian World Service; National Council of Churches in Australia; Cameron Murphy, President; NSW Council for Civil Liberties Inc; Dr Mohammed Alsalami, Chairman Organisation of Human Rights in Iraq; Public Interest Advocacy Service; Margaret Piper; Refugee Council of Australia; Refugee and Immigration Legal Centre Inc; Celestine Pooley; Sisters of Mercy, North Sydney; Springvale Community Aid and Advice Bureau; Elenie Poulos; Uniting Church in Australia; Patty Fawkner, Director Uniya Jesuit Social Justice Centre; Jane Brock, President, New South Wales Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; Arnold Zable