



In The Loop

SPSW Electronic Newsletter June 2006

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WELCOME

Welcome to the first edition of the new electronic newsletter for the Society of Professional Social Workers (SPSW). *In the Loop* will be sent to members as a regular information exchange.

The plan is to provide members with updates about developments, activities and interesting news items in a timely and easily accessible fashion. The information will be written in a relatively simple, short paragraph style in recognition of readers' busy and demanding professional lives.

Feedback and contributions can be forwarded to any of the SPSW Board members, whose contact details are provided at the end of the newsletter.

The SPSW website will continue to be used as a source of information for members and the wider social work field, and readers will note some of the e-newsletter content also posted on the website for wider distribution.

Keep your ideas flowing about possible website refinements and ways to keep members *In the Loop*.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

As President, I sent two letters to SPSW members (March 2006) concerning our communications and working plans in connection with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). These letters were as follows.

First letter distributed to Members:

Dear Member,

Re: 2006 State Social Work Conference

Since its inception The Society of Professional Social Workers (SPSW) has organised a State Conference for social workers as a commitment to the social work profession of Western Australia. The 2004 and 2005 conferences were well attended and feedback indicated that they were highly valued within the annual program of continuing professional development education available across the State.

The Board of the SPSW have been planning the 2006 State conference scheduled for June this year. This letter is to advise SPSW members about our decision to change this plan.

The Board of the SPSW met with the National President of the AASW, Bob Lonne, and the AASW Director for WA, Sue Ash, in January 2006 to make further progress and address developments in the interests of the social work profession. The outcome of the meeting and subsequent discussions has resolved that there are clear advantages for both organisations to enter negotiations for partnership of the forthcoming National AASW Conference and incorporate the current plan for the SPSW June Conference.

The benefits for SPSW members and the wider social work profession are seen to be:

- The opportunity to develop a broader and national educational program available for

- Western Australian members of both organisations and interstate participants
- Better use of joint resources of the AASW and the SPSW to promote a national event for continuing professional education for social workers
 - The take-up of SPSW expertise currently engaged in organising successful social work conferences
 - The expression of goodwill and continued commitment to potential conference contributors. The SPSW has been pleased to receive expressions of interest in the proposed June SPSW Conference in the form of early responses to the Call for Papers, and Sponsorships. A joint conference offers wider exposure for these interested parties.
 - Development of the current commitment of the SPSW and AASW to work collaboratively for the advancement of the social work profession.

Given these advantages, the Board of the SPSW agreed to partner with the AASW, AASWE (Australian Association of Social Work Educators), and the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers in the development and conduct of one optimal conference, to be held in Western Australia in November this year. This proposal has been accepted by the other three partner organisations and we have all met to begin the process.

We believe that it is important to our SPSW mission to enter this Conference partnership that promises to deliver a higher level of service and continuing professional education opportunities. Our social work profession has much to gain at this stage from strengthened professional relationships and organisation collaboration. Please feel confident to contact the Board for clarification or further explanation about conference plans.

Thank you for your continued membership and support of SPSW. We look forward to your participation in future SPSW activities and involvement where possible for you in various events through 2006/7.

Second Letter of Special Interest to Members:

Dear Member

We are pleased to announce that there has been significant progress in establishing a working relationship between our organisations, the AASW and SPSW, through an initial meeting in Perth on 24 January 2006 between members of the Board of the SPSW and the National President and WA Director of the AASW.

Our discussions covered the following areas:

- The future of Social Work and peak organisations;
- Reasserting the collective Social Work voice;
- The circumstances leading to the formation of the SPSW;
- Review and change processes occurring in the AASW;
- Matters of common interest; and
- Exploration of ways in which the two organisations can progress the interests of the profession.

Importantly, the meeting moved on to consider tangible opportunities for working together including:

- mutual support and continuing education;
- future conferences;
- social policy initiatives and collaborative involvement in policy development and submissions; and
- establishment of collaborative representations on other peak organisations and external groups.

These matters and processes have been endorsed by our boards and will continue to be developed within the agreed timeframe of the next 12 months. We are committed to actively working on the implementation of these directions in WA. We will keep you informed of all these matters as they progress. We are optimistic about these shared directions and the positive implications for progressing Social Work.

Signed

Bob Lonne President AASW

Brian Wooller National President SPSW

What's been happening since? Where are we up to now?

Well, SPSW has continued to meet with AASW to advance mutual issues of concern. Meetings have involved the Branch Director and Branch President of AASW with members of the SPSW Board. Ways to work jointly to support and contribute to further development of social work in Western Australia have been canvassed, with special attention to the Schools of Social Work, continuing professional education, and social policy.

The SPSW Board was pleased to receive an invitation from AASW to provide input to the national AASW structural review. We intend to contribute to the review and welcome comments from members about the existing structure of AASW and ideas for the Board to include in its submission for future changes. Board members will be keen to receive emails, phone calls and general feedback about this matter.

This is an important opportunity for us to influence the future direction of AASW in ways that develop a professional body that is representative, democratic, and financially sound.

As always, we would welcome members to assist in a number of SPSW activities. For example, you could join the Board as a general member or to take on a particular role:

- You could provide support for CPE events, for example, identify CPE topics across fields of practice, and coordinate speakers...
- You could help shape submissions and reports on a variety of policy and practice topics
- You could raise issues of concern to social work in the field so that SPSW can respond
- You could volunteer in conferences by helping at the registration desk, chairing sessions, putting together satchels...

Finally, this is *your* Society to make of in ways that meet *your* needs. SPSW provides a voice for the profession in WA and our national networks. *Let's get vocal together.*

Approach members of the Board with ideas and thoughts you may have about what we're doing, and what we could be doing.

I look forward to reading member contributions in future newsletters.

Brian Wooller, President



NATIONAL CONFERENCE

UNITED WE STAND

19-21 November 2006

Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle

Conference websites:

www.aasw.asn.au or www.aiwcw.org.au

There has been wide support for the decision to conduct the conference as collaboration between The Society of Professional Social Workers (WA), Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (AIWCW), and Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators (ASWWE). Given the four-way involvement in the organization of the Conference, the title "United We Stand" is very appropriate!

Early feedback has been positive. Organisers report that it was a hard task to decide on the final program. The Call for Papers, extended to 8th May 2006, resulted in a solid collection of varied papers and presentation topics that addressed the Conference themes:

- Working Together
- Partnerships
- Common Values
- Voice of the Consumer
- Learning From Each Other.

Principal Speaker will be Dr Alean El-Krenawi and Keynote Speakers will be Dr Fiona Stanley and Dr Catherine MacDonald.

The exciting, challenging and educational "United We Stand" Conference Program will be sent out via

email and/or post (for those without email) shortly.

Register early for a good discount and to ensure a place!

SPSW representatives:

National Conference Committee: Brian Wooller. The National Conference Committee includes the Local Organising Committee and the Program Committee on which we are represented by Cindy Gorton, Marion Palmer and Anne Pickard.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Renewals are due on the anniversary of when a member first joined SPSW.

To ensure continuity of your Public Indemnity Insurance coverage, as well as maintain your professional connections and commitments, keep your payments up-to-date and respond promptly to renewal reminders.



What is the Allied Health Alliance WA ?

The Allied Health Alliance of WA is an independent State level Allied Health representative body. The purpose of AHAWA is to:

- Raise the profile of allied health with a combined voice and a consistent message
- Advocate for allied health with particular regard to workforce issues and education and training issues
- Lobby for Allied Health in particular regard to state government
- Build partnerships that unify allied health and relevant partners in health and disability
- Link to relevant national bodies, and state level professional associations and sectors.

The AHAWA was launched on 1 March 2006 by Dr Rosalie Boyce, Research Fellow in the School of Health & Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Queensland. Dr Boyce gave an

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informative presentation on the history and future of Allied Health in Australia.

Membership

SPSW was a foundation member of AHAWA, which now also includes the following group:

- Metropolitan Allied Health Council Inc.
- APS College of Clinical Psychologists (WA)
- Speech Pathology Australia Association Inc (WA)
- Dietitians Association of Australia (WA)
- Australian Institute of Radiography (WA)
- Psychotherapists and Counsellors Association of WA Inc.
- Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health
- School of Psychology Murdoch University
- Therapy Focus (associate member).

Activities of AHAWA

- AHAWA has participated in the two Healthy Workforce Consultation Forums, hosted by the Department of Health in 2006
- AHAWA will co-host the World Congress of Health Professions with the Metropolitan Allied Health Council in Perth in March 2008
- AHAWA will be represented on the national body, the Allied Health Professions Australia.

Inaugural Annual General Meeting

The first AGM is on 20 June 2006, 5.30 to 7.00pm at Hollywood Private Hospital in Nedlands.

Mary Joyce, SPSW Representative and member of the AHAWA interim committee

KEEPING UP WITH WEBSITES AND ELECTRONIC NEWS

The New Critic is launched by UWA

"We are delighted to announce the arrival of The New Critic, the on-line journal of the Institute of Advanced Studies. The first issue contains articles from Gough Whitlam, Cedric Davies, Richard Woldendorp and Belinda Probert, on subjects including the current mining boom, homelessness, ideas about landscape from a renowned photographer, exit strategies from Iraq, the work of George Seddon, and reviews of

recent public discussions in Perth by intellectuals and writers.

Western Australia awaits the arrival of a journal of broad appeal that can draw together a wide array of concerns into a community that nurtures active debate and criticism. The challenges this State faces as it explores its place within Australia and surrounding regions cannot be tackled by any one group of interest. We hope that *The New Critic* will become a vehicle that enables scientists, lawyers, public servants, academics and concerned citizens from all walks of life to share their views on issues that deserve to be drawn into the widest possible sphere of public debate. Put simply, our aim is to seek to share the wisdom of creative, free thinking groups and individuals.

The New Critic will be easily printable in a reader-friendly format and we hope that contributions will be easily passed amongst friends and colleagues. The editors believe that the ideas discussed in *The New Critic* should be debated in the widest possible spheres of interest. It is intended that the journal will be published 6 times a year with a focus in each edition on printing reasoned, well-argued responses to previous contributions. The journal aims to publish material covering a wide range of areas (business, politics, sport and the arts) out of the belief that detailed criticism and debate is beneficial in all walks of life. Contributions will be actively sought by the editors but unsolicited work (including poetry and artwork) will also be welcomed.

We hope you'll participate--as readers and writers--by subscribing to *The New Critic* with an email to thenewcritic@uwa.edu.au with "subscribe" in the subject line. For more information please visit www.ias.uwa.edu.au

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FEEDBACK FROM CONFERENCES & CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION EVENTS

Participants complete Evaluation Sheets at all CPE events presented by SPSW and these provide invaluable feedback for review and planning purposes. All comments are helpful, but we can't help but take particular pleasure in positive feedback that tells us our efforts have been worthwhile, such as "When is the next one?" and "I wish I'd been there".

Workshop on Attachment Theory and Domestic Violence with Tony Morrison

Thanks from *The Loop* to Tracey Gillett, participant at the workshop. Tracey provided the following record of highlights that related particularly to her work with the Family Court in WA).

FAMILY COURT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- State based Court - approx 2,400 new children referrals per year
- One registry based in Perth and 5 regional centres, with the Court delivering over 40 counselling circuits per year and over 20 magistrate/registrars circuits, in addition to judicial circuits.
- Six judges; eight magistrates/registrar; 13 court mediators/counselors.

COLUMBUS PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT AND ROLE IN INFORMING NEW DEVELOPMENTS (introduced in 2001 and is currently being phased out in light of new developments and new legislation)

- Early identification and intervention program designed to address issues of Family violence; child abuse; substance abuse and mental health issues
- A multi disciplinary team approach, jointly managed by a designated counsellor and registrar
- Promoted information sharing and collaboration with other agencies
- Assistance for families to engage in treatment and education programs

AIMS

- Improve residence and contact outcomes for children
- Improve the durability of agreements

- Enhance the safety of children

EVALUATION highlighted the

- Important role in identifying violence issues early and early intervention
- Importance of the interface/collaboration with LAWA, DCD and community organisations and making the appropriate referrals – seen the development of protocols with DCD
- Practise issues
- Need for all cases to be reportable
- Need for the ongoing monitoring of cases and follow up
- Need for thorough screening at the outset of all matters

CASE ASSESSMENT CONFERENCE MODEL (introduced in July 2004)

- **First court event** initially conducted by a counsellor
- **Separate interviews** with each client and their respective legal representatives
- Purpose is to clarify the issues; **screen for family violence** and other risk factors and **assess risk**
- Proceed on a **case by case** basis after initial interviews
- Clarify issues and provide assessment and recommendations
- Discuss, negotiate if possible, and plan case management options.
- **Procedural hearing**, conducted by registrar – guided by counsellors assessment

CHILDREN'S CASES MODEL (to be introduced on July 1, 2006) in conjunction with the introduction of the Family Law Amendment Bill on Children's rights and the Family Relationship Centres.

- All cases will be managed by a magistrate and a family consultant (new name)
- Thorough screening for family and domestic violence in every case, as well as other risk factors
- Individual case management of all cases
- Reportable
- Greater opportunity to address underlying issues

- Monitoring of referrals to support/treatment services – attendance is not good enough, require evidence of treatment gains
- Develop greater links with DV Courts and DV services for woman and men
- Produce more stable long term outcomes for families

WHAT WORKS WELL?

- Through thorough screening – risks are identified and there is acknowledgment or admission by the person alleged to have committed the offence or evidence to support the allegations - Police incident reports/charges/medical evidence/Violence Restraining Orders
- Preparedness to attend treatment program and there are identifiable treatment gains
- Arrangements that allow safe handover of the children
- Independent information about the quality of the relationship between the parents and the children
- Independent information about the capacity of the parent to provide safe and nurturing contact

ATTACHMENT THEORY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WHAT CONTRIBUTION DO YOU THINK ATTACHMENT THEORY HAS MADE TO YOUR POSITION IN YOUR AGENCY and IN YOUR WORK?

- Grounding theory when working with families who have DV as part of their system
- Important to remember that one size does not fit all
- Important factor to consider in the screening process and when preparing for Family Reports
- Valuable in conjunction with other theories
- Influences decisions about appropriate referrals, most appropriate agency
- Informs decision making and recommendations with respect to contact/residency, if there should be an order for contact, on what basis, frequency and length of contact, handover arrangements, separation of siblings, contact with extended family members, relocation issues etc.

COMING EVENTS

- *“Beyond the Boundaries: Families & Professions Working Together Symposium”*

Drug & Alcohol Office
21&22 September 2006
www.palmerston.org.au

- *“Resilience: Build it”*

YACWA Annual Conference
2 & 3 November 2006
Hotel Grand Chancellor, Perth
Youth Affairs Council of WA
www.yacwa.com.au

HOT POTATOES

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

WorkChoices will affect the work of social workers and service users in direct and indirect, immediate and longer term ways. Are you aware of the implications for your particular field of practice, agency, client group, and your family and the community that you live in?

There is a High Court challenge being mounted and the future of industrial relations in Australia is being shaped. Legislation is currently being drafted (Independent Contractors Act) and essentially these people will be excluded from the IR arena because independent contractors will not be considered employees and therefore not be subject to the scope of the new IR provisions.

There has been little public debate about this aspect of the new IR laws. But perhaps this issue is relevant to your own social work practice? There are ways for you to become involved and sources of information about the issues. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations and the Office of the Employment Advocate are presenting seminars to outline the changes. Phone 1300 363 264 or book online at www.workchoices.gov.au/events

AROUND THE STATE GOVERNMENT

Social workers are well placed to have informed opinions about developments in government agencies, from highest levels of decision making to frontline locations. Across State Government policies and services that are critical to the wellbeing of West Australians – there you'll see

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social workers. We also have an awareness of 'hot potatoes' and political developments that impact on all of us. We have opinions and questions too.

What about the fact that the Minister for Disability Services seems to be constantly changing. *Do you know who is holding down the 'job' today?*

TERTIARY UPDATE

INTRODUCING MARION PALMER:

“Hello I am the new Fieldwork Coordinator in the Department of Social Work and Social Policy at Curtin University of Technology I am delighted to be working with this year's Academic Field Education Coordinators, Sue Ash (until June) and Associate Professor Fran Crawford (from June). Dianne Hill, Fieldwork Administrative Support Officer, continues to provide excellent support in contacting the field at this time of the year regarding placements options for Social Work students.

This is an exciting time for Social Work with challenges and changes in the air. I look forward to meeting many of you at our first joint "United We Stand" National Conference with the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), the Australian Institute of Welfare and Community Workers (AIWCW), the Australian Association of Social Work and Welfare Educators (AASWWE) and of course the Society of Professional Social Workers (SPSW). These four organisations are jointly hosting this National Conference in November 2006.

In the meantime please do get in touch with Dianne Hill or myself regarding placements in your agency (9266 7868 or 9266 7982). The placement opportunities provided by our professional practitioners is an anchorage point of great importance in preparing social workers for the ongoing task of making a difference.

As part of the celebrations for National Social Work Day 2006 here at Curtin we spoke on Curtin Radio and helped promote social work and the value of social work education.

Cooperating field educators and agencies play an integral part in social worker education. Our next generation of social workers depends upon quality mentoring and supervision of students by experienced social workers and field educators.

*Marion Palmer, Fieldwork Coordinator
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LOCUM REGISTER

In April of 2004 the Board of SPSW approved the formation of the Locum Register, a service to Social Workers in WA enabling qualified workers to obtain short term or casual employment commensurate with their experience, preferences and availability. The Society owes a huge debt of gratitude to Dr Barbara Meddin who established and managed the register from its inception to the present day. A large number of Social Workers have been matched up with a wide range of positions to the mutual satisfaction of the membership and employing agencies.

Dr Meddin has now passed the baton on to Ross Webber who will be managing the Register for the foreseeable future. A member of the SPSW Board Ross's e-mail address is at the end of this newsletter. Ross can be contacted by phone on (w) 9229 6500 (m) 0403 181 203 (h) 9387 6836.

Information relating to the Register is available on the SPSW website at -

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

In addition to information about the conditions and requirements concerning the operation of the Register, Application Forms for individuals and organisations can also be downloaded.

Dr Meddin will continue to present her hugely popular annual seminar, **Looking for a Job**, for graduate Social Workers around the end of October.

Ross Webber, SPSW Board Member

SPSW IN CONSULTATIONS

ALLIED HEALTH AND HEALTH SCIENCE PROFESSIONS WORKFORCE CONSULTATION FORUMS

Board members Mary Joyce and Wendy Butler represented the SPSW at two forums with the Department of Health in relation to workforce issues for Social Work.

The first forum was held on 1st March with a follow up forum on 12th June.

The forums were part of the Department's Health Reform Agenda to address workforce issues across Allied Health and the Health Science Professions.

Issues such as attraction and retention, education and training and career structures were discussed in the first forum. Short, medium and long term strategies for building the workforce, doing things differently and education and training were covered in the second forum.

Guest speakers, such as Dr Neal Fong, Dr Rosalie Boyce and Dr Simon Towler provided relevant background to multi-disciplinary workshops, drawing from national and international examples, which assisted in identifying and prioritising issues.

Wendy Butler, SPSW Board Member

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