



WA Social Work News 'In the Loop'

SPSW Electronic Newsletter May 2007



Contents

President's Column
South West Professional Development Day
Innovations - News from the health Sector
Conference News - CAYPAK
Continuing Professional Education
Curtin Seeks 'Sessionals'
Hong Kong SW Conference
Editorial Note
SPSW Board Contacts

President's Column

Since its inception, the Society of Professional Workers (SPSW) has, through the hard work of a small number of people, been able to undertake the very necessary professional development activities so important to the profession, represent the profession on matters of professional importance and keep the organisation afloat financially. This has been a difficult and at times stressful activity particularly for members of the Board.

As a purely volunteer organisation where most of the hard workers have jobs, some Board members are completing study, and some have family and care responsibilities, the sustainability of the level of energy and enthusiasm for the necessary tasks is constantly under threat.

As members it is important that you give Board members feedback about our SPSW future direction and help us to make the decision about whether or not there is value in continuing to exist as an organisation.

The society has been successful on a number of fronts. The first and most enduring of these has been in the area of continuing education including a leading role in the United we Stand Conference in November 2006. We have also made contributions to matters of public policy, notably over child protection, and maintained a voice and involvement in the health arena. In November 2005 we were also instrumental in organising a concert to aid relief following the Tsunami that devastated many of Australia's northern neighbours.

A lot of work has remained incomplete or undone. The most perplexing has been our inability to impact the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) in any meaningful way to allow for a coming together of our two organisations.

The AASW has recently had a number of gatherings and reports on its future direction including restructure, constitutional change and realignment. The direction they are taking continues to fail the test of branch autonomy that directly led to the current situation of two professional bodies and the very distressing past of near organisational bankruptcy.

Without adequate safeguards and a lack of genuine authority at the branch level, the AASW will always be vulnerable to a relapse. As long as the branches are merely agents of a company (and that is legally what the AASW is) the dangers of national control will be ever present.

As an organization, the SPSW has attempted to keep its fees low while offering expensive service to its members through a professional indemnity insurance policy. Contemporary professional practice requires this, not only while each of us practices but also depending on any statutory

limitation for years after we cease practice. Liability only really ends in some cases on death.

People often point out the fact that there have been no claims of a social workers negligence that has reached a law court in Australia. This in many respects is due to the overwhelming powerlessness of most of the people who use social work services.

To my mind it is an unacceptable reason for remaining uninsured that social workers are relying on coverage from another source such as an employer. It also needs to be remembered that even in a voluntary capacity such as committees and boards, if a professional view is given by a social worker this can lead to a claim of negligence.

As an organization, we sit clearly at the cross roads. Without a membership growth and a commitment we will find it impossible to continue.

The profession is also currently faced with very real threats to its existence. The numbers enrolling in undergraduate courses are dropping; the demand for labour in the community services sector is growing with a decline in supply and for social work a plethora of other professional courses.

Employers are using other bench marks such as a Certificate 4 in welfare and related areas. Social work courses at universities are under threat (this is nothing new) and the declining interest by candidates for their programs is not helping. Decisions are being made by potential social work candidates to reappraise their investment in education. It takes four years to complete a social work degree and only three years or at times less for other qualifications to obtain comparable employment.

Many of the current difficulties facing our profession are not new. But the energy and resources to tackle them are not clearly evident. Without a resurgence of that necessary energy and an active commitment to the social work profession we risk the outcome of irrelevance.

This President's Column is my 'call to arms'. I urge you to provide your views on future directions and continuance of this association via phone, letter or email. Please support your professional association that supports you. Volunteer to assist or nominate for the Board. Help us gain strength through increased membership and

participation. Circulate our information, contacts and membership forms to your networks. Thank you,

*Brian Wooller,
President SPSW, May 2007*



South West Professional Development Day

Well the Social Work network is alive and well in the South West. On Friday, 30th March I attended a forum hosted by the South West Branch of the AASW along with Edith Cowan University, Bunbury Campus and the City of Bunbury.

The guest speaker was the Hon. David Malcom, Professor of Law at Notre Dame University, Fremantle and his topic was "Addressing Juvenile Crime by Fixing the Dysfunctional Family". The audience was made up of Social Workers from a range of service areas as well as members of the public.

Professor Malcom spoke from his considerable experience, about the role of the family in preventing crime and in particular, families of children who are at risk of offending. He acknowledged that the community needs to feel safe and secure but that crime and prevention of crime are community problems.

He reported on the Family Conferencing initiatives and the cautioning systems which have gone some way in reducing the numbers of offences dealt with in the Children's Court. However, he acknowledged that, as these programs only affect those who have offended; it is still in society's interests to look at the root causes of crime and to address educational and role model deficits.

Research has shown that intervening directly in the lives of children and their families goes some way to reducing the risk and depth of involvement in crime. Professor Malcom discussed a range of programs that have been implemented around the world such as home visiting and support programs for low income families, parenting programs and early intervention programs.

He reiterated that crime is not just a criminal justice issue, but rather that it is a social issue.

Professor Malcolm also spoke about his early life growing up in Bunbury and there were several members of the audience who remembered him as a boy.

There was an opportunity to mix informally and later in the evening I joined the group for dinner at the Lighthouse restaurant where Professor Malcolm gave a short and entertaining history of his life.

I very much enjoyed being with colleagues at this event. There was a very positive feeling among those who attended and I was made to feel very welcome.

The South West group is planning further forums and I will keep you informed of future events.

Wendy Butler, Social Work Supervisor, Royal Perth Hospital (and SPSW Board Member)

Innovations in Health

The Allied Health Review meeting in Hobart, December 2006, highlighted innovations relevant to Social Work. This is an annual meeting of Health Round Table (HRT), which aims to ...”collect, analyse and publish information comparing organizations and identifying ways to improve organizational practices”.

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) provided a poster regarding the Strategic Winter Allied Team (SWAT) – enquiries can be directed to the Coordinator, Carolyne Wood.

Other relevant posters/presentations included:

Social Work Outcomes Project – contact Fran Hodgson, Director of Social Work Hunter New England, NSW - following a literature search and development of the Client Outcomes Tool (COT), it was piloted with positive results. The tool includes the client articulating up to five areas of concern, scaling their feelings re these concerns pre- and post- social work intervention and scaling how much difference the client thought the social worker made in relation to the client’s issues. Fran would

now like to involve other health sites in developing the tool further.

ABC - Activity Barcoding System – HRT has developed scanners so that Social Workers and other Allied Health staff can input their statistics as they go, using barcodes. The aim is to reduce data entry time and improve accuracy. There is a cost involved for each department and for each scanner.

Interim Care – Michelle Daly, Director Social Work, Gold Coast Health Service described a COAG funded initiative to address numbers and length of stay (LOS) of care awaiting placement (CAP) patients. This included development of policies and procedures with expectations and time-frames, an information booklet, an interim care agreement, weekly group information sessions and the establishment of an interim care team.

Transition Care – Jill Feltham, Director Social Work, Austin Hospital, presented a Transition Care Service funded innovation, also targeting CAP patients. The 12-week program included 1.9fte Social Work – it was successful in decreasing numbers and LOS of CAP patients and it provided increased resources to allow patients to consider a return home.

Integrated Home and Community Care – this program in New Zealand provided one point of entry for all referrals for community services for post adult acute hospital discharge and elderly community services. It addressed problems of duplication of care, referrals, assessment, administrative systems and has a focus on quality of care.

Other aspects of the Allied Health Review meeting included Allied Health data, discussion regarding ‘hot issues’ for each of the hospitals and a model for identifying projects that will win executive approval.

*Sue Jordan, Senior Social Worker, SCGH
(and SPSW Board Member)
11 March, 2007*





Inaugural, International, Conference

**Sheraton Hotel
Perth, July 23-25, 2007**

A very different Conference with stakeholder participation planned for and achieved.

Delegates have started to register and there is a significant representation from overseas young people and those that work with them and for them.

Diverse cross section of young people, practitioners, educators and policy makers are providing keynotes addresses and/or presenting workshops and papers.

Promises to be stimulating, interactive, practical, educational and dare we say it fun too!!!

Web-based Conference promotional material for ease of access, continual updates and to be relevant to the key stakeholder population.

Go to www.caypaks.com for more information and how to register for this valuable professional development event in WA this year.

Cindy Gorton (SPSW Board member)

Continuing Professional Education (CPE)

SPSW launches 2007/8 CPE Program

The Society's Continuing Professional Education (CPE) Committee headed by Anne Pickard with the help of Barbara Meddin is currently developing the SPSW CPE program for next financial year.

The first event will be a one day workshop on "The Art of Counseling" presented by Julie Dickinson and is scheduled for 3 July 2007. Julie is a clinical social worker with an immense amount of experience in private practice. She has also taught counselling at Curtin University. Members will be

notified of the program, venue and registration details in the next few weeks.

The CPE Committee has plans for a range of workshops and seminars including topics covering specific practice areas, those of general interest, and topics which are relevant to social workers in particular employment agencies. Be sure and watch the newsletter for details of coming events.

There are still spots in the calendar and the CPE Committee would welcome input from members and their colleagues on topics that members or their agencies are interested in. Recommendations about presenters/speakers and suggested venues would also be welcome. Please contact either Anne or Barbie with your suggestions as follows:

Anne – apickard@vtown.com.au

Barbie – waybob@bekkers.com.au

We look forward to hearing from you concerning your CPE interests, ideas and needs. New committee members are always welcome!

Anne Pickard, SPSW Board member

Interested in being a 'sessional'?

Sessional Staff Positions at Curtin University

The Department of Social Work & Social Policy at Curtin University of Technology is seeking expressions of interests from suitably qualified and experienced social workers to go on our register for sessional work.

A degree or higher qualification in Social Work and eligibility for full membership of the AASW is mandatory. Supervision experience in the field and academic experience is desirable.

Work that may be available in second semester 2007 is in Field Education as a Liaison or in External Social Work Supervision. Other work available may be Unit Coordination, Lecturing or Tutoring.

Register your interest in Field Education by contacting Marion Palmer on ph. 9266 7982 or m.palmer@curtin.edu.au and submitting your

Curriculum Vitae (CV). To go on the register for other academic work contact the Faculty Manager, Peter Perriam p.perriam@curtin.edu.au 9266 2152 and submit your CV.

Marion Palmer, Curtin University (and SPSW Board Member)

Hong Kong Social Work Conference

Two SPSW members, Carolyne Wood and Mary Joyce attended the 5th International Conference, Social Work in Health and Mental Health in Hong Kong in December 2006.

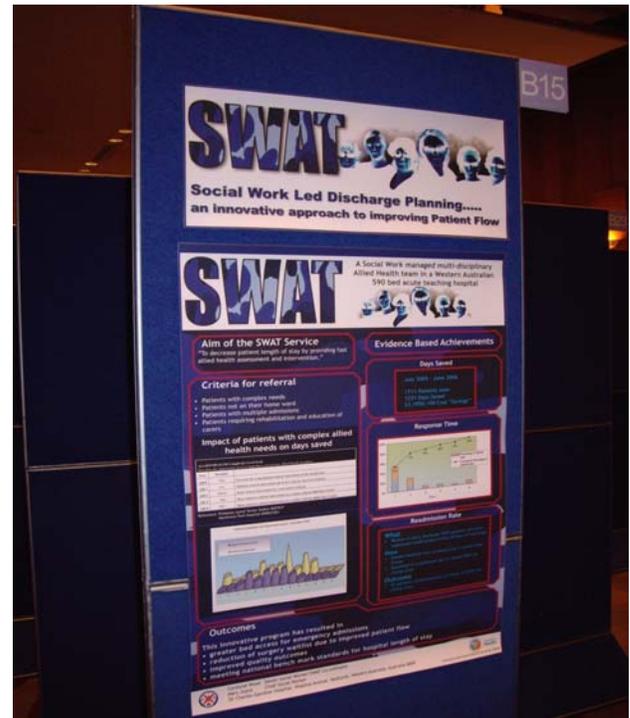
The conference attracted 1300 delegates from 30 countries and provided a diverse program incorporating many field visits.

Carolyne and Mary presented a poster on a new hospital initiative at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, an Allied Health led Discharge Team, (known as SWAT) which is managed by Carolyne.

Carolyne in the picture below, is seated outside the Kwong Wah Hospital which is known for its use of traditional Chinese Medicines.



The poster presented at the conference;



Carolyne can be contacted on 9346 4666 in regard to the details of the SWAT team.

Following the conference Mary visited China and the Beijing “Maple Leaf Centre” which was a wonderful example of community development work. The centre commenced in 1988 and started China’s first women’s ‘hotline’ in 1992. In 2004 it started an ‘anti domestic violence hotline’ which was a courageous venture in a previously taboo area. The centre works mainly on volunteer labour and has meet a great need in the community.

The Last Word - Editorial Note

Autumn is providing lovely colours, rains for some, and another edition of the *Loop* for us in Western Australia. Yes, we have a proud local focus and respond to our members scattered throughout the State.

As Editor, I would enjoy including news and information drawn from all corners so please put pen to paper, fingers to the keyboard, voice to the phone. Our e-newsletter seeks to stimulate ideas and share information so send your news, reports, plans, events, letters, issues and photographs too.

If you would like help in tightening up the wording for our readers then that will be no problem. As you can see, 'In the Loop' is meant to be simple, short paragraph style writing that recognises readers' busy and demanding professional lives. This is not a refereed academic journal but an opportunity for members to keep up-to-date.

Feedback and contributions can be forwarded to any of the SPSW Board members, or contact me direct. As President Brian Wooller wrote in his Column, your active support for your professional organisation continues to be essential.

Karen Vincent, PhD Candidate UWA (and SPSW Board Member)

EMAIL CONTACT LIST OF SPSW BOARD MEMBERS 2007

Pattie Benjamin – VICE PRESIDENT
pbenjamin@iprimus.com.au

Wendy Butler
wendy.butler@health.wa.gov.au

Cindy Gorton
c_gorton@bigpond.com

Sue Jordan
Sue.Jordan@health.wa.gov.au

Mary Joyce - SECRETARY
mary.joyce@health.wa.gov.au

Barbara Meddin
waybob@bekkers.com.au

Tracey Nicholson
tracey.nicolson@dcd.wa.gov.au

Marion Palmer
m.palmer@curtin.edu.au

Anne Pickard - TREASURER
apickard@vtown.com.au

Karen Vincent
vincek02@student.uwa.edu.au

Ross Webber
ross.webber@correctiveservices.wa.gov.au

Brian Wooller – PRESIDENT
woollerb@missionaustralia.com.au

