



Society of Professional Social Workers (Inc)
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<http://spsw.highway1.com.au>

WA Social Work News “In the Loop”

SPSW Electronic Newsletter August 2009

From the President:

Dear colleagues

It's been a busy time since the SPSW AGM in October 2008, which saw some new faces on the Board. As we have to rely on hard working and busy volunteers the progression of our work doesn't happen as quickly as we would like. So, if you have some time and interest to give to your profession, please consider joining one of the sub-committees. The Board is currently looking for a Minutes Secretary and a Correspondence Secretary, to lighten the load on our Secretary. Enquiries for these two positions or in regard to membership of any of our sub-committees, should be directed to either myself (0402 458 015 or 9583 6688), or the Vice President, Dr Barbara Meddin (0417 959 058), if you wish to know more about the sub-committees and what they do. We would be very happy to welcome and install you.

Professional Indemnity Insurance is a necessary protection tool for any professional worker these days and social workers are no different. In a growing rights based society, where professionals are being sued because of the information they might have provided to a client, or

because of the perceptions of the client, or as a result of the action following any advice or therapy provided, could end up in a civil action being initiated by that client. The cost of professional indemnity insurance for members of the SPSW is included in the membership fees. Membership fees are also tax deductible for those who are employed.

One group of social workers the Board has become concerned about in this regard is retirees, because of the potential for a retiree to be sued for considerable time after they have retired. The Board has determined that the membership fee structure will incorporate a smaller fee for retirees, given their decreased income level, while enabling them to join the SPSW and obtain professional indemnity insurance. You might have attended the forum on this subject held in 2008, at which it became very clear that retirees are not immune from civil action being brought against them by a former client. For those of us who are employed, it is imperative that you have professional indemnity insurance. The easiest and cheapest way of achieving this is by joining the SPSW.

The Board is putting together a membership recruitment package, which

will contain all of the relevant information and forms used. With websites and electronic means available these days, it becomes necessary to better use these techniques, as well as have an overall recruitment plan. Members will be informed of the progress of this package as soon as the details have been finalised.

Several sub-committees work on specialised practice and/or policy issues. Apart from enhancing their work by having more members assist them, we wish to increase our sub-committees, but are hampered by insufficient volunteers to undertake this work. If you are interested, please contact Dr Barbara Meddin for further details.

The SPSW Board has embarked on an ambitious plan to continue to provide social workers of Western Australia with quality professional development and training opportunities. For members of the SPSW, the annual completion of a minimum set of requirements means her or his continuing professional educational and practice is recognised by the Board through the awarding of the 'Fellow' status. To retain this status each year, the member needs to ensure that a sufficient number of points are accredited against them.

Discussions with the AASW about the amalgamation of the AASW (WA Branch) and the SPSW continue. However, in recent meetings with the AASW, it was made very clear by them that no form of partnership will be entertained. Where this eventually leads to is uncertain, but you will be kept informed as soon as practicable.

I invite you to read the rest of this newsletter and to join our forums throughout the year, as well as become

more actively involved (no matter how much time you can spare). If you aren't already a member, I encourage you to join.

Sincerely
Brian

Brian J. Dodds, President, SPSW

Just a thought...

"In the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."

Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-1968)

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**Society of Professional Social
Workers**

Re-Launched Locum/Employment Register Commencing NOW!

In 2004 the Board of the Society of Professional Social Workers established the Locum Register for Social Workers. SPSW is now relaunching the register with name change - The Locum/Employment Register. Individual members of the SPSW and non members of the SPSW are invited to register with the Register. Following on from placing their name on the register, Social Workers' details will be forwarded to relevant agencies who are seeking Social Worker Locums in the identified area of interest or where they are permanent positions on offer. Those on the register will also be informed of positions that the Society is notified of.

The SPSW Locum/Employment Register will provide Agencies looking to fill positions for and Social Workers looking for employment with a fast and efficient service, free of charge.

So if you are requiring more information please feel free to contact Tracey Nicolson, SPSW Board Member on tracey.nicolson@gmail.com

All SPSW Locum/Employment Register forms can be located at <http://socprofsocwkr.highway1.com.au>

A Piece of History...

"Social work pioneer Jane Addams was one of the first women to receive a Nobel Peace Prize, which was awarded in 1931. Known best for establishing settlement houses in Chicago for immigrants in the early 1900s, Addams was a dedicated community organizer and peace activist."

Source:
www.socialworkers.org

Upcoming CPE Events 2009

Following on from the highly successful series of workshops presented recently by SARC in partnership with SPSW, SPSW has a whole host of up-coming very exciting and important CPE events.

Meet the Minister:

On Tuesday September 8th 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in seminar rooms 3 and 4 of the DCP canteen area 189 Royal Street East Perth come hear the Honourable Robyn McSweeney Minister for Child Protection, Community Services, Senior and Volunteering and Women's Interest give us the latest update on the role of guardianship for children in care.

Workshop Series on Mental Health:

SPSW will host a symposium on mental health in October in partnership this time with the South Metropolitan Area Mental Health Service and Youth Reach South. The symposium will cover skill and knowledge development in respect to working with children, adolescents, adults, and older adults where mental health issues are present. More details will follow shortly. Don't miss this important and valuable CPE opportunity. The symposium will be beneficial for all professionals but especially to those who are not mental health specialists but who work with clients with mental health problems.

Applying for a Job:

Planned for October will be SPSW's annual 'Applying for a Job in the WA Public Sector' seminar. This highly successful workshop presented by Dr. Barbara Meddin is targeted at graduating social worker students and has been run annually for more than 10 years now. SPSW runs the workshop in partnership with different Uni social work schools and presents it at minimal cost to the students. It covers resume writing, writing selection criteria, and preparing for a job interview. More details to follow.

Workshop Series on Supervision:

Beginning in the New Year 2010 will be a series of workshops on professional supervision. The first workshop will cover developing and extending your skills for staff supervision. This workshop is targeted at supervisors. The second workshop will focus on getting the most out of supervision including peer supervision. This workshop is targeted at supervisees and of course we should all be supervisees irrespective if we are also supervisors too. The third workshop will focus on dealing with problem staff and disciplinary and developmental processes. Watch your email for more details.

The CPE committee looks forward to seeing you at some or all of the forthcoming CPE events. Also why not consider getting involved and joining SPSW's CPE committee. If you're interested contact Marie Arends on 9218 0136

Marie Arends, CPE Chair
Marion Palmer
Barbara Meddin



WA Social Worker of the Year Announced

At a ceremony attended by social workers, colleagues, friends and consumers, the finalists and winners of the inaugural 'WA Social Worker of the Year' awards were honoured. The awards, the first in Australia to recognise the work of social workers, were held at The University of Western Australia on

Tuesday, June 23, 2009.

Finalists and winners across the four categories were as follows:

CYFAA and UWA Social Work Alumni Rural and Remote Practitioner Award Finalists

Bronwyn Cutler, Kipling Cutler & Associates (Albany)
Rosalie Dwyer, Department for Child Protection (Warburton)
Elizabeth Trotti, Department of Health (Geraldton)

Winner: Rosalie Dwyer, Department for Child Protection (Warburton)

Department for Child Protection Rising Star Award Finalists

Jessica Pyburne, Wanslea Family Services
Ben Whitehouse, Department for Child Protection
Kirsty Snelgrove, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital

Winner: Ben Whitehouse, Department for Child Protection

Anglicare WA Head, Heart and Hands Award Finalists

Anthony Collier, Youth Reach South
Natarlie deCinque, Department of Health
Barbara Meddin, Human Service Consulting

Winner: Anthony Collier, Youth Reach South

Richmond Fellowship WA Agent of Change Award Finalists

Celine Harrison, King Edward Memorial Hospital
Ann Margaret O'Neill, Department of the Attorney General
Margaret Stockton, South Metro Area Health Service

Winner: Margaret Stockton, South Metro

Area Health Service

The Social Worker of the Year Award was chosen from the four category winners. The first WA Social Worker of the Year was awarded to Rosalie Dwyer.

Rosalie is a social worker from a remote indigenous community located more than 1,500 kilometres from Perth and 900 kilometres from Kalgoorlie-Boulder. Rosalie is a senior community worker with the Department for Child Protection in Warburton. Her outstanding dedication and commitment to the people of Warburton and the Ngaanyatjarra communities was acknowledged.

Congratulations to all and particularly to our SPSW members including our Vice President Dr Barbara Meddin!

Source: <http://www.aasw.asn.au/blog/latest-posts/wa-social-worker-of-the-year-announced>

Joining the SPSW!

Who We Are

The Society of Professional Social Workers (Inc) was established in Perth Western Australia in June 2003 as an incorporated organisation, according with the provisions of Western Australian legislation, the Associations Incorporation Act 1987.

Eligibility

A person is eligible to become a member of the Society if:

- that person has successfully completed an educational program approved by the Board from time to time as meeting the requirements for achieving a qualification for the practice of social work; or
- that person has satisfied the Board that, if holding an early social work

qualification, that person has completed appropriate professional social work experience; or

- that person is a member of the AASW; or
- a person has satisfied the Board that they are eligible for membership.

The membership fee of currently enrolled full time **students** in either undergraduate or postgraduate social work courses will be set **at half the annual membership fee** of Fellows and Members. Student membership excludes indemnity insurance.

For details on how to join visit our website at: <http://spsw.highway1.com.au/membership.html>

Editor's Invitation

In the Loop is your newsletter and we'd love to feature your views on the important issues going on around us or perhaps you can provide an insight into your area of work.

Please send your contributions for the next edition of **In the Loop** to Katrina.Etherington@dcp.wa.gov.au

The newsletter is distributed electronically to members & will have details of developments, activities & interesting news items about SPSW.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Katrina Etherington
Editor In the Loop E-News
SPSW

Have you heard about the **NEW INTERNATIONALIST?**

'With over 30 years of publishing under its belt, and more than 60,000 subscribers worldwide, the **New Internationalist** is renowned for its radical, campaigning stance on a range of world issues, from the cynical marketing of baby milk in the Majority World to human rights in Burma.'

The best bit is that back issues are available online **FREE!** June's issue is available now at: <http://www.newint.org/issues/>

GREENings fellow lovers of this Earth, our one and only habitable planet!



In the interests of promoting **GREEN** and sustainable living, **GREEN** facts and tips will be featured here in each issue. There are hundreds of simple things we can all do each day to reduce our carbon footprint.

Did you know:

1 ream of paper = 6% of a tree and 5.4kg CO₂ in the atmosphere



3 sheets of A4 paper = 1 litre of water

This month's focus is our workplace. To save energy you can:

- shut down computers and turn off monitors at the end of each day
- where possible, turn off photocopiers and printers when not in use, especially on weekends!
- the really obvious one.... check that you need to print all the pages from a document, website etc. How much paper gets wasted?

- please recycle your plastics and paper products from your lunch and snacks. Most workplaces have a recycling bin and if not then how about starting one?!

If anyone wants to contribute to **GREEN** News or has some good ideas, please let the editor know. Sustainably yours, Ed

A short piece from Bill Smith, Social Work Student on his experience of social work placement.

The Emerging Practitioner *(A re-invention)*

By the time I graduate (at the end of this year), I will have turned sixty. With regard to that milestone, a comment by Leonard Cohen at his concert earlier this year at Sandalford Winery, really resonated with me. He said that at the commencement of his musical comeback experience he felt he was a 'young man of sixty, a kid with a crazy dream'.

I also find myself on the cusp of an emerging career in Social Work and in many ways experiencing those feelings I had when at the age of seventeen, I commenced a thirty eight year career as a Cartographer with the then Department of Lands and Surveys (now Landgate). The major difference between then and now is that the intervening years have seen me marrying, raising a family of three wonderful children (resulting, at present, in five beautiful grandchildren) and having many very rich and diverse life experiences.

At the age of fifty five I became financially empowered (superannuation) and determined to commit to a process of intellectual and personal re-invigoration and pursue tertiary study (an opportunity not available to me when I left school at age seventeen). With the full support of my partner and family and friends, I enrolled at Curtin to study Social Work.

My Second Field Placement Experience
(A reflexive journey of self discovery in practice)

Introduction

At the beginning of 2008, I had completed three successful years of Social Work study and was accepted for Honours. I confidently sought and found a placement that, I felt, would support my proposed thesis and looked forward to conducting the research. Journal entries from that time detail my attempts to engage people within the organisation and my efforts to gain support for my research and seek opportunities for practice experience. The placement lasted for five weeks and I found myself withdrawing from the unit. My confidence was shattered by the experience and I found myself retreating and regrouping in the safe environment of personal counselling.

I subsequently determined to have a 'gap year' and, with the support of my partner, immersed myself in grandchildren, family and friends and some home projects that had previously been put on hold. During the year my ongoing reflections on practice environments lead me to realise that Child Protection would best suit and enhance the knowledge and skills I already possessed.

A Reflexive Journey in Placement

Adams et al (2002, 3) tell us that

"reflexivity means being in a circular process in which [we] 'put [ourselves] in the picture' by thinking and acting with the people [we] are serving, so that [our] understandings and actions inevitably are changed by [our] experiences with others".

My second attempt at second field placement saw me being accepted by the Armadale office of the Department for Child Protection (DCP) in February of this year. Tentative early efforts quickly developed with the committed and enthusiastic guidance and support of my supervisor. Her encouragement and that of the staff at Armadale with whom I engaged during my time there, gave my flagging confidence an immense boost.

Some of the significant goals I achieved during placement include:

- Completion of a large (fifty seven page) case chronology
- A capacity for self care
- My first home visit
- Effectively managing a small (six) caseload
- Developing my reporting style
- Developing my communication and client engagement style
- Co-facilitating an interview with a child
- Being involved with taking a child into care
- Front end experience with the Duty team

Conclusion:

I had a rich and varied experience whilst on placement with Armadale DCP. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have been supervised by a social worker thoroughly committed to my learning experience whilst ensuring I was safe throughout. Her modelling of social work practice values generally and in child protection in particular have helped to inspire me to pursue practice in this field. I have recently applied for the employment pool at DCP and, if successful, expect to commence practice in 2010.

Reference: Adams, R., L. Dominelli and M. Payne. 2002. *Critical Practice in Social Work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave



Bill Smith (2009)
Student Social Worker
Curtin University of Technology

WANTED

Social Work Student Representative for the SPSW Board.

The SPSW is looking for an undergraduate student representative to sit on the board of Directors, and provide student input and perspectives to SPSW matters and activities.

Meetings are held once a month and if you believe you might be the right person for the job then email your expression of interest to the editor Katrina Etherington at Katrina.Etherington@dcp.wa.gov.au before August 31 2009.

Churchill Fellowship awarded to SPSW Board Member Helen McMahon



Helen McMahon, District Director at Midland DCP has received a Churchill Fellowship.

Two people working hard to support children and families have been awarded Churchill Fellowships and we are proud to announce that one of those is our own SPSW member and member of the board, Helen McMahon. Helen is the District Director at the Midland District of the Department for Child Protection.

Helen will travel to Canada to study the use of Indigenous kinship networks to provide safety for children at risk of harm.

“On my trip, I will be researching programs that foster healthy partnerships between statutory organisations and Indigenous support organisations,” Helen said.

“I would especially like to learn ways of building trust with carers and families and how we can come to a shared understanding of child safety, so that Departmental staff can provide wonderful support to any family kinship networks who care for a child.”

June Councillor, Senior Officer Indigenous Early Childhood, Department for Communities has been awarded the Department’s 2009 Churchill Fellowship and will visit Canada and the United States next year to research pre-natal alcohol exposure and its impact on parenting, especially in Indigenous communities.

To view the full list of 2009 Churchill Fellows, visit <http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/>



National Child Protection Week 6-12 September 2009 – get involved

This year, the National Child Protection Week committee are taking a new and exciting approach to getting the whole Australian community involved in the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

The centrepiece of the campaign is the largest attitudinal survey ever conducted in this country.

All adults are being asked to spend time thinking and communicating their attitudes to the safety and wellbeing of Australia’s children and as many adults as possible are being asked to commit to ongoing involvement as advocates for children.

For more information on how to ‘get involved’ visit:

<http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/events/cpweek/index.html>