



Society of Professional Social Workers (Inc)

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WA Social Work E-News

In the Loop Autumn 2013

Welcome to the Autumn issue of *In the Loop*. I am not sure what happened to 2012 but it appears to have evaporated with only one issue for the year! This does not mean that the Board has not been busy doing important work on the behalf of the membership, just that we have been too busy to write about it.

This year we have continued to try to negotiate a collaborative relationship with the AASW but as you can see from our most recent letter and the reply from Sabina Leitman, both published below, it appears that we have gone as far as is possible with our efforts.

We have however been successful in having some large employers of Social Workers acknowledging our members as having equal standing with AASW members. Department of Child Protection will now pay membership fees of either organisation for staff who take on the very important responsibility of supervising students and the Department of Corrective Services have agreed to include eligibility for SPSW or AASW membership as a selection requirement for some positions. We have also been kept busy approving numerous applications from prospective members. It seems that there is increasing interest in the Society from Social Workers seeking an alternative organisation with lower fees, a pro-active approach to professional development activities and a more local feel.

Editor

FROM THE TREASURER

The most exciting news (if a Treasurer's report can be exciting) is that the Society's accounts are now computerised and we have a new, improved on-line method of processing your

credit card payments. This means that, despite a few teething problems, which involved having to master QuickBooks and entering over two years of data, we now have a very efficient accounting system to better serve our members. The 11 very successful workshops that SPSW has run throughout the 2011 – 2012 financial year have provided us with a very healthy bank balance. Some of the workshops have been over-subscribed; consequently, the CPE committee is anticipating re-presenting a number of them.

Membership numbers continue to increase. As a service to our members, the fees have been kept deliberately low at \$345:00 for full membership. This represents very good value, as it provides complete Professional Indemnity Insurance coverage managed by Jardine Lloyd Thompson Pty Ltd, discounted workshops fees, and a locum service with wide coverage throughout the community services sector.

Congratulations to Paul Argyle who has volunteered to take over the Treasurer role.

Welcome Paul

Just a reminder – Vero forms must be completed every year to ensure your insurance coverage.

I am pleased to report that the Society is in a sound financial position, as evidenced by the audited financial report for 2011-2012 tabled at the Annual General Meeting in October 2012, and the regular Treasurer's report to the SPSW Board meetings.

Sharon McAuliffe
Treasurer



Continuing Professional Education

The Society of Professional Social Workers has worked tirelessly to bring a wide range of relevant forums and workshops for members and non-members across the sector. All of them were extremely well received, several were over subscribed and presented several times during the CPE program season. The workshop on Supervising Staff With Performance Problems was run both in the metropolitan area and in a regional area. Several of the workshops were customized and presented specifically for a particular agency.

In 2012 these included the following workshops and forums:

- Child Pornography and On Line Offenders: How Do We Keep Children Safe
- Parenting Children with Complex Trauma
- Coping with Children in Foster Care who have Experienced Trauma
- Trauma and Attachment
- Healing the Hurt Child
- Working with Clients with Personality Disorders: What Makes them Tick
- Engaging and Working with Indigenous Clients: Understanding the Impact of History and Culture
- Advanced Supervision Workshop: Supervising Staff with Performance Problems
- Bamboo Micro Credit: Engaging People in Indonesia to Help Themselves

SPSW, as a service to the sector, circulates CPE activities not only of SPSW but from the sector concerning continuing professional education; workshops, forums, talks and presentations by overseas visitors; at times research findings and frequently job vacancies.

2013 also looks to be an exciting year in the CPE arena with some stimulating forums; a number of our very popular workshops will be presented again as well as some new and important topics.

SPSW will kick off the season with a forum presented by Leanne Aurisch who shared with us her fascinating experiences. The forum called *Battling the Bucket of Crabs* was held on Wednesday, May 1st at the Office of the Commission for Children and Young People at 5:45pm. Leanne who is currently a senior social worker/authorized mental health practitioner in

the public mental health system worked in a remote community on the Cape York peninsula in Far North QLD where she did clinical work, community development and Health promotion as part of the federal gov't's "social and emotional well being" funding. The forum was well received!

Following on from the Forum on May 15th, Helen Fowler and Kaye Houghton will present their highly successful workshop:

Child Pornography and On-Line Offenders. How do we keep children safe? Please see attached fliers.

In June Kim Wedge will present her half day seminar on *Early Brain Development, Implications for Practice*. Kim presented this workshop previously for SPSW and it was extremely well received. This workshop will be on June 24th.

July 3rd will see Dr Bill Saunders present his much acclaimed workshop that he has also presented previously for SPSW on *Working with Personality Disorders, What Makes them Tick*. Each time this workshop has been run, it has been booked out so be sure and book early.

In August Series 5 of the always well received and over subscribed workshop on *Supervising Staff: Skills for Practice* will be presented by Dr. Barbara Meddin on Aug 5th and Aug 7th. Again this has always been oversubscribed so book early for this one too.

Dates of other workshops that are planned but yet to be confirmed as to dates will be circulated shortly as will the fliers for several of the above workshops. Don't miss out register early as SPSW workshops are always over subscribed.

The CPE committee would love to hear from you with any ideas for future workshops and forums or if you would like to join the CPE committee, please contact the chair of the CPE committee Dr Barbara Meddin at: waybob@bekkers.com.au

Dr. Barbara Meddin,
Chair, SPSW Continuing Education Committee

So You Think You are Having a Bad Day?

Spare a thought for your colleagues in Palestine as described in the story below:

Social workers in Palestine sprang into action to help children when armed conflict recently broke out with Israel, according to [this article](#) in Great Britain's *The Guardian* by Dr. Rory Truell, director-general of the [International Federation of Social Workers](#).

Truell contacted colleagues in Palestine to find out how they were coping.

Child protection social worker Riad went to local media to persuade editors not to post graphic photos of dead people that could further traumatize children.

Riad also went to schools to train teachers on how to help pupils deal with the social and psychological impact of the bombings.

For instance, in order to help children vent he encouraged teachers to give them each five minutes to talk about how their families were affected.

Another social worker named Mohammed couldn't get to his office due to the bombings, so fretted over not being able to assist his youth and elderly clients.

A fragile cease fire was negotiated. Mohammed said there is much work to do when bombings end.

"When the bombing stops, we will rebuild. There are so many people who will need social work to overcome their grief and loss and we will have a lot of work to do."

Reprinted from [SocialWorkersSpeak.org](#)

Don't forget to utilize your shoprite membership! I recently saved \$800 when I purchased my new stove and cooktop!
(Ed)



Board Member Profile

This year we will be highlighting profiles of the members who make up the SPSW Board.

First cab off the rank of course is our President, Brian Dodds. Brian says that he became a Social Worker in a moment of madness. (I am sure he is not alone there!) He started his career working as a Juvenile Justice Group Worker at Longmore Juvenile Detention Centre and then obtained a promotion which saw him move to the Walcott Centre. He was also a volunteer leader with the YMCA. At the time he was studying Social and Political Theory and Psychology at Murdoch but coming into contact with Social Workers made him re-think his career path and he visited Curtin University to find out what Social Work was all about. He was granted a scholarship by the Department of Child Welfare to complete his Social Work degree which enabled him to move out of institutional work. Brian reports that he has no regrets about becoming a Social Worker, only that Social Workers remain unrecognised and unregistered.

Brian has remained with the Department throughout it's various identity changes and while he has gradually climbed the ladder he has always enjoyed having contact with clients. From base grade Social Worker he moved to Senior Social Worker, Juvenile Justice and from there to pre-adoption work. He then became a Senior Case Work Supervisor, initially in the Northam office before moving to Joondalup. In 2003 the title of his role changed to Team Leader which saw a greater focus on management. He was promoted to Assistant District Director for Mandurah in 2008.

Brian holds grave concerns for the profession if "it doesn't get it's act together". He fears that it will be lost altogether if we don't have a strong professional group to market the profession. It currently appears to lack coherence which is not assisted by the lack of registration he says. The Curtin

School of Social Work has been joined with the School of Occupational Therapy which appears to be the dominant partner in the marriage. Like a number of other departments the Department for Child Protection appears to favour the employment of other professions such as psychology, some of whom are only four year trained. While he acknowledges that the establishment of Specified Callings has helped he fears that dedicated Social Work positions will be lost unless the profession becomes registered. He is frustrated that while discussions over this have been ongoing since the 1940s we still do not have the status of a registered profession.

Brian has always been active in the leadership of the profession. He was on the Committee of the WA Branch of the AASW when he noted that while it was the most financial branch in the country the funds were continually being lost to the National Branch with little benefit to WA Social Workers. He therefore moved to set up the Social Services Training Organisation to focus on training and development in WA. Six months later this changed its name to the SPSW. Brian Wooler was the initial president of the new Society and Brian Dodds took over this role when his predecessor resigned. Brian has been in this role ever since. In 2009 a vote was held regarding whether to disband the Society and to re-join the AASW. Members narrowly defeated this proposal and the Society continued despite a reduced membership. The SPSW has since made a number of unsuccessful attempts to collaborate with the AASW particularly on issues of policy but the Association has made it clear that such a collaboration is not on their agenda.

Brian states that what keeps him going is being able to see change and results no matter how small. "It is important that the pace of change is driven by the client" Brian says. "Social Work is a great helping profession, enabling others rather than doing things for them". Good Social workers are able to work out what is achievable and focus on that in Brian's opinion.

So where would Brian see himself going next? "A transfer closer to home would be

ideal. I travel past a number of other DCP offices en route to Mandurah each day so Armadale, Gosnells or Cannington would be nice" he says, He anticipates being in the workforce for at least another five years or as long as he is still enjoying the job and good health but doesn't plan on climbing further up the ladder. He has acted in Director positions several times but finds that at this level he spent much of his time immersed in departmental politics while in his current role he is still able to be involved in contentious cases.

In regard to the future of the SPSW, Brian sees its role as an organisation devoted to professional development and training. He doesn't see it expanding to become a national organisation in competition with the AASW. Its membership has remained steady at 65 members so we need to market the Society or focus on professional development he says.

Politically, Brian sees himself as a Social Democrat with a passion for industrial Relations. He is also Vice President of the CSA/CPSU and sees the union movement as an important part of democracy. Brian's quote for the day: "A happy workforce is a productive workforce".

Obituaries

Sadly we mark the passing of two wonderful WA social workers in this edition.

Juta Condos (AKA Lathouwers) passed away on the 5th of March aged 78. Juta will be fondly recalled by the many Social Work students that she supervised at the Department of Social Security Student unit and by many friends and colleagues. Juta was a vivacious and energetic Social Worker with a strong sense of social justice and concern for others. She leaves a large family of children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Toni Liebeck passed away on the 15th of February having been thrown from her horse. Toni graduated from UWA in 1985 with a BSW. In that year she had a near fatal car accident outside UWA resulting in a head injury which was instrumental in her decision to work with people with acquired brain injury. Toni worked at the Neurosciences Unit in Shenton Park where no doubt she will be sadly missed by friends and colleagues. She leaves a husband, twin boys aged 6 and a daughter aged 11.

Good News Story

Turning around lives of the homeless

By Duncan Kennedy BBC News, Sydney

A project helping homeless people in a Sydney suburb is claiming impressive results, by challenging the notion that people living on the streets need to find the help themselves.

Are we helpless when it comes to the homeless?

It seems that many countries and societies don't know how to solve this enduring problem.

But now, in Australia, which has 100,000 homeless people, an attempt to confront the issue with direct, quantifiable action appears to be yielding impressive results, for both the individuals and the state.

It all began in 2007, when a philanthropist approached Mission Australia with an idea.

Mission Australia is a 150-year-old Christian community organisation that assists those on the lower rungs of life, such as the poor and homeless and has the staff and expertise to take on big projects.

The philanthropist, who prefers anonymity to publicity, explained that her own parents had been homeless and that, with the considerable personal resources at her disposal, she wanted to give something back.

Michael Project

- A three-year project in Sydney, 2008-2010, for men only
- It provided one-to-one carers
- And it aimed to address issues as fast as

possible

- Thousands of men passed through it, and 106 were revisited a year later
- These men were found to have improved circumstances in relation to health, housing and employment
- Michael ended but there are hopes to roll it out
- A follow-on initiative, Michael's Intensive Supported Housing Accord, operates in Sydney's western suburbs

After discussions, the scheme came to be called the Michael Project, named in memory of her dead husband.

At her request, the aim was to design a brand new service and to change the lives of thousands of homeless men, permanently.

She would put up the money for what would become an expensive experiment in social readjustment.

These were, after all, people who had often given up on themselves and were largely being ignored by society.

Of the thousands of men who passed through the Michael Project, 253 entered the research study and 106 made it to 12 months.

One of those was Gordon. He is 68 and has the kind of friendly, white-bearded, Santa Claus-type face that charms everyone who meets him.

But behind the jocular, engaging demeanour, Gordon's story reads like it's been lifted from the pages of the homeless person's stock-in-trade manual.

Gordon was an accountant with two practices and a beautiful home.

But 12 years ago, he lost everything, including his girlfriend, when mental health problems began to dog him.

Gordon has turned his life around

It left him devastated and homeless.

For the first two years "home" became a shipping container.

The adjacent river was his bathroom. He shared a field with a goat and a cow.

Gordon sank further into depression and was admitted to a series of psychiatric hospitals for a succession of well-meaning, but ultimately futile, therapies.

Then, four years ago, Gordon was introduced to Mission Australia and the Michael Project. It changed everything.

He now has a clean, one-bedroom apartment in Parramatta, west of Sydney, that he calls home.

There's a television, an audio system, a bookshelf that includes Shakespeare and pictures that he painted, including one of a 19th Century Mexican cowboy.

"That picture got me into art college when I was a young man," explains Gordon, with a nostalgic glint in his eye.

The apartment and all that's in it have been paid for by Gordon himself out of the disability allowance that's been organised for him.

"The project changed my life," he says. "It gave me back my confidence."

The Michael Project is about more than putting a roof over someone's head.

It is a wrap-around support service tailored to an individual's needs.

It's more expensive to have a person homeless than not to have a person homeless"

Says James Toomey Mission Australia

At its heart lies the one-to-one relationship between the homeless person and their mentor, or care worker.

In Gordon's case that's Claudia, a care worker with the kind of patient, understanding disposition usually associated with the most dedicated of hospice nurses.

Each case manager like Claudia has up to 20 clients but together, they systematically worked through each of Gordon's problems.

If he needed a dentist, Claudia would get him an appointment the same afternoon.

If he required a doctor's visit, one would be arranged for the following morning.

Job interviews, CVs, contact numbers, access to phones, advice on pensions, everything needed to help Gordon re-enter normal society was provided and, crucially, it would be provided immediately.

There would be no drift, no inertia, no "I'll do it tomorrow" attitude, which would only rack up the costs of fixing it later.

This would be a full-on, bespoke, intensive approach to break the cycle of aimlessness and hopelessness associated with long term homelessness.

The results of the whole scheme, since verified by outside auditors, have been remarkable.

Before Michael, there was practically nobody in long-term housing. After Michael, 50% were in permanent homes.

Sydney has thousands of homeless

Before, homeless people were four times more likely to need hospital care than the general public. After, that dropped to 1.7 times. Before, 6% were employed. Afterwards, that tripled to 18%.

Overall, the cost to taxpayers went down from \$24,399 (£15,567) per homeless person, a year (in costs to the health, justice and other systems) to \$20,798 (£13,270). That's a saving to the state of \$3,601 (£2,298) for every homeless person.

"It's more expensive to have a person homeless than not to have a person homeless," says James Toomey from Mission Australia.

"It doesn't make sense for the state to ignore homeless people, as that's more expensive to taxpayers."

Mission Australia accepts that the Michael Project was relatively small in size and that more than half of those who entered the scheme dropped out.

But it says that's only to be expected with people who are, by definition, rootless and unsettled.

But Mission Australia still believes the programme could be scaled up nationally and serve as a template for similar operations in other countries.

"Every where has homeless people", says Toomey. "But we've shown that you can do something about it and save money.

"These are forgotten people at the margins of society and it's not right they are ignored, when our project is proof that they can re-engage and become full citizens again, not just burdens."

Gordon no longer feels like a burden. Every Monday you can now catch him at his local theatre rehearsing a play.

"We do a new piece every six weeks," he says. "I really enjoy getting stuck into the text and love performing."

"Would you ever be homeless again?" I ask.

"No, I will never be homeless again. Never. I might even take up painting, once more. Another cowboy, perhaps?"

Reply from AASW to our request for a collaborative approach:

Mr Brain Dodds (Yes we know he's smart -ed)
President
Society for Professional Social Work
PO 156 Subiaco
WA 6904

16 November 2012

Dear Brian

Thank you for your letter of 14 September 2012. I apologise for the delay in responding. I have been out of the country until very recently.

The Branch Management Committee has discussed your invitation to meet for the purpose considering how both organisations may be able to jointly collaborate on matters relevant to our respective associations.

The AASW is the professional association that represents social workers and social work across Australia. In the Western Australian context the SPSW and the AASW are in direct competition for potential members and for profiling their respective associations in the public domain. This places our two associations in a different relationship from that of collaborating with organisations that do not represent social workers.

From the AASW perspective cooperation will be constrained by these parameters. It is the AASW WA Branch view where there are matters that may be of interest to the SPSW and that do not work against the best interest of the AASW; we would welcome cooperation, for example seeking SPSW support for registration of social work.

Therefore whilst available to meet I am unsure what more can be achieved from such a meeting. If you think there would be a benefit to discuss this further please contact me on 0417936529 or email me s.leitmann@amnet.net.au

Kind regards
Sabina Leitmann
AASW WA Branch President

Despite this response, in which they say they do now want to do anything where we are in direct

competition with one another, they have at least on two occasions now asked us to circulate their CPE fliers! (Ed)

SPSW Achievements:

Department of Corrective Services has agreed to require **eligibility for membership in AASW or SPSW** in all Specified Callings positions. PMH and all Dept of Health JDF's already do this also.

Accolades for SPSW Circulation List!

Hi, Barbara.

Your email network is brilliant. I've used it to find locums twice now and both times there was a lot of responses. I've just employed 3 people from this round.

ROB McKRILL

**SECTION HEAD - SOCIAL WORK
PRINCESS MARGARET HOSPITAL**

Membership Renewal

SPSW membership renewal for 2013/14 is due at the end of June 2013.

Watch out for your renewal notice email with information and membership form attached. This will be sent to you late May.

Reminder that benefits of SPSW membership include:

- professional liability and indemnity insurance coverage
- current and relevant continuing professional education activities
- quarterly forums that address current topics of interest
- locum register for social workers seeking employment
- E-Newsletter
- advocacy with government and non government agencies in respect to social policy issues
- standards of professional practice
- support and advocacy for individual members.

We hope you will renew and remain a member of this dynamic and professional organisation for social workers.....