



**Society of Professional Social Workers (Inc)**  
**PO Box 156, Subiaco, Western Australia 6904**

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

### **From the President**

For those of you who were unable to attend the SPSW AGM for 2010, the following report was provided by President Brian Dodds:

This report will contain a brief overview of the events of the past twelve months. There is a need for more volunteers to assist in a variety of capacities, if the work of the Society is to continue and grow.

The current Board consists of Dr Barbara Meddin (Vice President), Ms Cindy Gorton (Secretary), Ms Norma Welsh (Treasurer) and Director Ms Helen McMahon, Ms Marie Arends, Ms Marion Palmer, Ms Tracey Nicolson, Ms Amanda Perlinski, Ms Maria Radici and Ms Catherine Migro. Due to work and family commitments, two other Directors found it necessary to resign during the year, so I would like to pay tribute to Ms Stephanie Keating and Mr Bill Smith. Norma Welsh also took leave for a couple of months and was temporarily replaced by Mr Wade Sinclair.

I would also like to thank two other people for their work, Ms Maria Radici as Minutes Secretary and Ms Meredith Doyle as Membership Secretary. All in all, an excellent bunch of volunteer social workers who are committed to their profession.

### **Active Sub-committees**

The Board has delegated some of its work to the following active sub-committees, namely:

- The Executive Committee, consisting of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer, chaired by myself. The committee manages urgent matters and the

administration of the Society between Board meetings.

- The Continuing Professional Education Committee, chaired by Marie Arends. This committee is responsible for developing a programme aimed at furthering the knowledge and skills of social workers in their roles, regardless of where they work.
- The Professional Practice Committee, chaired by Dr Barbara Meddin. This committee considers complaints against members, research articles, ethical issues and overall professional practice policy for the Board.

### **Membership**

One of our most difficult areas to achieve good results in has been with the recruitment and retention of members. It remains our greatest challenge.

- For example, in July 2009, we started with forty members and through the concerted efforts of me and the Vice President, the number increased to sixty. Sadly, I note that the membership renewals since July 2010 have not sustained this and our membership appears to have dropped to thirty-eight.

The Board has already approved the establishment of the Membership Recruitment Committee, but no members were appointed to it. The function of the committee is to develop, manage and market the recruitment process. It will be necessary for the Board to look carefully at what can and should be done about this.

### **Future and Role of the Society**

The SPSW website provides a synopsis of how and why the SPSW was created, so I don't intend to make much comment on it. However, partly because of the drop in members and the increasing difficulty in gaining the support of volunteers (we have no paid support staff), I believe that the Board must examine the future role and viability of the SPSW. There are many pros and cons in regard to the Society continuing, but in my opinion, it needs to be for more than providing excellent continuing professional, education workshops and seminars. It would be my intention to clearly place this issue on the Board's agenda in the forthcoming months.

### **Member's Update - What is SPSW doing?**

To keep members informed and up to date on what your association is doing for you, here is a quick summary.

1. CPE calendar of monthly skills workshops and events is being prepared.
2. Advocacy on behalf of social workers to Disability Services Centre who have removed the title 'Social Worker' on positions. President Brian Dodds has written a letter of our concern to Community and Public Sector Union.
3. Lobbying on behalf of accredited social workers retaining eligibility for Medicare rebate for clients. A letter template for members to use to write to Federal members and join the lobbying action will be provided again.
4. Approach to AASW WA to collaborate in advocacy and lobbying to add weight to social worker actions.
5. Universities requested to provide student representatives for our Board.
6. Discussions with Indigenous Social Workers Group to commence.
7. Locum and employment register

and advertising linking employers with job seekers and job seekers with employers.

8. Associations Liability Insurance for members has been renewed.
9. Welcome to new Board members and new members of sub-committees
10. New membership certificates for all members.
11. Membership cards for all members.
12. Shop Rite membership benefits for all members has been approved.

Members are invited to be involved. There are many ways to be involved from being on one of the sub-committees, helping out at CPE forums and events, suggesting activities and innovations.

(Marion Palmer February 2011)

### **SPSW Membership**

**Reminder** that SPSW membership runs from July 1 to June 30 each year.

Several members have not yet renewed their membership for the 2010/2011 year and you are reminded to do so as soon as possible.

At the end of May a membership renewal package will be sent to all current members for the 2011/2012 year.

### **Editorial**

*"I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains."*

How often over the last few months has my mind drifted to the much loved Dorothea MacKeller poem that most of us would have learned in school? As our television sets have immersed us in the tragedies overwhelming our fellow Australians and close New Zealand cousins it is time to spare a thought for our social work colleagues who may have been personally touched by flood, fire and cataclysm or who having been helping to put back together those many shattered lives. Though never mentioned by the media, we know that they are out there picking up the pieces both literally and figuratively.

For many rural communities the only access that people have to professional counselling is via social workers. More, now than ever, do we need social work to remain available to these communities via the Medicare rebate. As April is fast approaching, now is the time to be writing to your local member of Federal Parliament or the Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, to remind her of this when she is making the critical decision in regard to this matter. Attached to this newsletter are templates that you can use to do so. If you prefer, please feel free to write your own, but either way do it **Now!**

This newsletter contains news of Helen McMahon's Churchill Scholarship trip and the outcome of the WA Social Worker of the Year awards. I am off on an adventure of my own later this month to investigate services for people with exceptionally complex needs in the UK courtesy of a "Count Me In" Scholarship from the Disability Services Commission. While this means no ***In the Loop*** for the next three months (not that this is an unusual state of affairs) while I am on leave of absence from the Board, I am sure that there will be lots to tell in the next edition and of course at forums later this year.

Amanda Perlinski  
Editor.

## ***WA Social Worker of the Year Awards 2010***



The WA Social Worker of the Year Awards were held at scenic Curtin University. This was the second year the awards had been conducted and it was considered a resounding success. The SPSW's Tracy Nicolson was nominated for the Rural and Remote practitioner social work award and we congratulate her on this recognition of her dedicated practice.

It was a great celebration of the achievements of social workers and was ably hosted by Verity James. This year included the Indigenous social worker of the year award which was sponsored by Richmond Fellowship. The SPSW was a minor sponsor and it was great to be a part of this celebration of the social work profession.

**Congratulations go to the following people:** Glenda Kickett was named the WA Social Worker of the Year 2010. Edith Cowan Rural and Remote Practitioner Award won by Emma White. GESB Rising Star Award won by Sophie Heal, Department for Child Protection Head, Heart and Hands Award won by Joanna Delaney. KPMG Australia Agent of Change award won by Julie McKenzie, Richmond Fellowship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Award won by Glenda Kickett.

Maria Radici

## ***Locum and Employment Register***

In 2004 the Board of the Society of Professional Social Workers established the Locum and Employment Register for Social Workers. Individual members of the SPSW and non members of the SPSW are invited to register with the Register. The Register will both circulate notices for locum and

permanent positions in the government and non government sector and forward details of those on the register to relevant agencies who are seeking Social Workers in the identified area of interest.

The registered Social Workers details will be forwarded to registered relevant agencies who are seeking Social Worker Locums in the identified area of interest.

The SPSW Locum and Employment Register attempts to provide Agencies looking for Locum Social Workers and Social Workers looking for Locums, a fast and efficient service, free of charge.

So if you are requiring more information please feel free to contact Tracey Nicolson, Chair, Locum and Employment Register, on [tracey.nicolson@gmail.com](mailto:tracey.nicolson@gmail.com)

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

### ***Excerpts of 2010 AGM Minutes (subject to endorsement at the next AGM)***

The treasurer's report saw the SPSW sitting well into the black, a very good result for an organisation with such a small number of members. Norma Welsh advised that for personal reasons, she would not be seeking re-election to the Board or as Treasurer. She acknowledged the assistance over the year of Bill Smith and Wade Sinclair who have ably conducted the role during her leave.

#### **Election of Board of Directors:**

**President** – Brian Dodds was returned un-opposed;

**Vice President** – Barbara Meddin was returned un-opposed;

**Secretary** – Cindy Gorton was returned un-opposed;

**Treasurer** – Wade Sinclair was returned un-opposed;

**Directors** - Apart from the Executive positions, Nine Director positions were available to fill. The following nominations were received and all were elected un-opposed: Debbie Henderson; Marion Palmer, Sharon McAuliffe; Ann McKay; Helen McMahan; Amanda Perlinski. The latter was omitted from the minutes (ed.)

At the next Board Meeting Deborah Gould and Tracey Nicolson were also endorsed as Board Members

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## ***CPE Report***

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As you would probably be aware 2010 was a highly successful year for SPSW's Continuing Education activities. Workshops and forums were provided on a range of topics including professional supervision, youth mental health, and attachment just to mention a few. Forums for 2010 included topics such as intrafamilial homicide, permanency planning and special guardianship and also child advocacy centres.

A new addition this year has been the provision of CPE workshops exclusively for an agency and its nominated staff. Workshops such as the youth mental health workshop and the attachment styles and substance workshop were provided for specific government and non- government agencies.

*Be sure and let the CPE committee know if your agency would be interested in having any of our monthly CPE activities run exclusively for your agency. To run solely for your agency, it is more the cost effective than sending individual registrations.*

Our first event of this year was an Implementation Update concerning special guardianship on Tuesday, March 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:15 p.m. It was very well attended with lots of positive feedback.

Other workshops being considered for this coming year are practicing in a culturally and linguistically diverse environment, understanding and dealing with personality disorders, SPSW's supervision series, and a report on Amanda's Count Me In Scholarship findings on Services and Supports for people with Exceptionally Complex Needs in the UK. Also planned are forums on legal issues for human service professionals, and a visit to the recently opened Child Advocacy Centre just to mention a few.

If you have other topics that you would like to see presented, please let us know.

Welcome to new CPE committee members, Ann McKay, Kate Ducanson, and Tracey Nicolson. We always welcome new members and new ideas so if you have either (in relation to CPE that is) please let us know.

A fond farewell goes to Marie Arends who is the outgoing chair of last year's CPE committee. Her energy, enthusiasm, CPE ideas, and super skill at making CPE certificates will be missed!

Dr. Barbara Meddin, Chair, Continuing Education Committee.

### **Are you accruing your CPE points - why not become a Fellow of SPSW?**

At the end of the last financial year, the criteria for becoming a Fellow of the Society of Professional Social Workers was endorsed and circulated. It provides a mechanism whereby an SPSW member is eligible to be recognized as a Fellow of the Society of Professional Social Workers.

It entails engaging in on-going continuing professional education (CPE) related to a member's professional practice through a range of alternative paths. These are set out below.

Upon meeting the eligibility criteria for joining SPSW and completing the application requirements, a social worker is recognized as a *member* of SPSW. In order to be recognized as a Fellow, you must accrue at least 100 CPE points during a given membership year and provide documentation of such to SPSW through an SPSW CPE log that will be available to all members.

Points may be accrued in at least 3 of the 9 separate categories as set out below: At least 50% of the points accrued must come from attending face to face training or engaging in post graduate education. For those in remote areas for their entire membership year, 35% of their CPE points will need to be accrued from face to face training.

#### **Points accrued are as follows:**

13. Attending professional training – 1 point for every hour of training (excluding morning/afternoon tea/lunch). **Double points – i.e. 2 points per hour for training**

#### **presented or sponsored by SPSW.**

14. Post Graduate Education – 10 points for each course successfully completed – i.e. passed the courses).
15. Presenting non work related training – 7 points for a half day presentation, 14 points for a full day.
16. Reading professional literature/research – 1 point per journal article; 5 points for a professional book.
17. Publishing a professional article – in a referred journal – 15 points; in a non refereed journal – 5 points.
18. Presenting a paper at a conference – at a conference where papers are chosen by a refereed process – 10 points; non refereed – 5 points.
19. Undertaking professional research or making a professional submission– 10 points
20. Supervision of Social Work Students – 10 points per student per semester.
21. Attendance at a conference – 1 point for every hour of professional content –i.e. excludes lunches, morning and afternoon teas and social activities of the conference.

Note: no points granted for work required activities – i.e. research that is part of your job, submissions that are job required etc)

All SPSW sponsored activities accrue double CPE points.

All members of SPSW will be presented a membership certificate and a membership card that recognizes them as a member of the Society for Professional Social Workers. If eligibility for Fellow status is established this will be noted on the card and certificate. You will need to provide a declaration in respect to the number of CPE points you have accrued with your 2011 membership renewal. Being a Fellow demonstrates your commitment to on-going professional education and confirms for your employer and your clients that your expertise and knowledge is up to date. We look forward to having you become a Fellow of the Society of Professional Social Workers. You will find the required Fellow documents attached including the original letter that was sent out to members inviting them to become a Fellow. (Barbara Meddin)

## “IT STARTED WITH A MOOSE”



McMahon  
2009 Churchill Fellow

The very first day of my Fellowship started at 4 am when I caught a taxi, plane and yet another plane to Prince George in Northern British Columbia, Canada. I walked into Carrier Sekani, a First Nations agency humming with energy and ideas and ... yes, you guessed it...moose. The moose had gone to meet its maker some time before and had been transformed into a casserole of surpassing tenderness and flavour, flanked by wild salmon and the traditional bannock, baked by a local group.

This wonderful first day set the tone for my whole trip through the 5 provinces in Canada that I visited. The continual theme for my trip was energy, generosity, FOOD and humour. At Carrier Sekani I had a very stimulating discussion with the staff of the Child and Family Services side of the organisation and was privileged to hear their dilemmas in relation to the delegation of child protection roles to First Nations agencies. Despite my best intentions I found myself at some point in the morning standing at the whiteboard with a marker in my hand but the interest in our ideas and dilemmas in Australia made this perfectly OK. I found the agencies I visited were fascinated by Australia and by the time I left British Columbia I had invited 27 people to stay at my house and meet our local Aboriginal people!

The agency had not long taken over Guardianship functions for First Nations Children of the Carrier and Sekani First Nations. They were grappling with exactly the same complexities as I have been in Australia, with wonderful success.

After staying the night in a truly quirky Bed and Breakfast in Prince George I set off with

my trusty companions to Saik'uz a First Nations reserve about another 100 kilometres on from Prince George where I met a fantastic group of local women, the Child Welfare Committee who act as an early warning system for families who are having difficulties and whose children may be at risk. Nearly all were currently caring for or had cared for grandchildren or other kin and so their insights were really precious. It was from these women that I learned how much support they give each other and how much they love the support they receive from the Family Support workers. Then there was more moose, more salmon, more bannock and something truly horrible which they called Indian ice cream. Unfortunately whilst it looked like strawberry mousse (no pun intended) it tasted like the worse, most bitter horrible thing you could imagine. Everyone enjoyed my pain enormously.

I was telling them that I had always thought of asking a group of local grandmothers if they would be a kind of council of grandmas that we could talk to about old ways and how we should deal with certain problems. As much of our talking had to be translated the Committee thought that I already had this council of grandmothers. They were tremendously excited and immediately expressed their wish to come to Australia and meet with the grandmas and exchange ideas. I had to explain that it was an idea, not a reality and their answer was that I should have the grandmas ready to talk to them by the time they came out next year!

I left reluctantly and as I hugged them goodbye I felt that through our love for children and our commitment to family we had truly had a meeting of hearts.

Then it was up at 4 am again (what was I thinking when I planned this?) and back to Vancouver, across to Vancouver Island and off up country to Duncan and Nanaimo where I distinguished myself by being able to pronounce Lalum'Utul' Smun'Eem and Kwumut Lelum without swallowing my teeth. What a terrific group of people. I am in awe of their discipline, vision and open heartedness in their approach to First Nations Children and Families.

...and this was just the first week.

For this article I can just tell you that the next three weeks was a whirlwind of getting up early, flying to the next Province and meeting the next group of wonderful people. I described it to one of my friends as being like having 50 first dates! In my report I describe in detail the work of the first Nations organisations I spent time with and the insights I gained from being with them.

After travelling through Alberta, Manitoba and Ontario I finished up in Nova Scotia and there I really lost my heart.

I spent a fantastic week with the staff of Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services, especially Lesley McKee, Child Protection Manager, who made me laugh so much, on occasions we had to stop the car by the side of the road and get out!

My overwhelming impression of the unique and special First Nations organisations that I visited is of an enormously dedicated group of professionals doing a delicate and difficult job with care and sensitivity. The challenges I saw these organisations facing seem to me to be:

- community perceptions of the organisation's motives and mandate;
- prevention and the resources to do it;
- innovative approaches to assessment that use the huge strengths of the organisation including the brilliant family group conferencing at intake (Mi'kmaw Family Services);
- coverage of large areas and keeping standards and morale high;
- developing targeted carer recruitment for specific roles/children and developing training for different types of carers;
- persuading funding bodies (Provincial and Federal Governments) to support and value alternative assessment and work practices and processes that truly reflect the needs and culture of aboriginal people.

**In conclusion I want to thank these wonderful organisations for offering me a unique insight into work that strives to offer respectful and empowering opportunities to families and keeps children safe.**

### ***Social Workers in the News***

Did you know that Social Workers in Israel are on strike over their conditions? According to Y-Net News the strike by Social Workers in Israel could prompt unrest similar to that seen in Egypt and Tunisia!

On a more local note, The West Australian Newspaper provided a wonderful spread on **Western Australian Women for the Centenary of International Women's Day. How wonderful to find so many of the celebrated women were Social Workers!**

**Jean Beadle (1868-1942)** was tagged Feminist and Social Worker, although where she received her degree from was not clear. She spent her early life in Melbourne so perhaps they had a course there then, maybe some of our members could enlighten us? She was active in the Women's Suffrage Alliance, a Special Magistrate in the Children's Court, an Official Visitor to Fremantle Prison and treasurer to the West Perth relief committee during the depression.

**Edith Cowan 1861-1932** is also tagged as an early Social Worker with similar achievements and how could we ever doubt the reliability of the West Australian?

**Helen Catalini** is a contemporary Social Worker well known in the multicultural affairs field.

**Paddy Creevey** is another contemporary who is well known for her community development work in the Peel Region and her Mayorship of the city of Mandurah.

**Kay Hallahan** is referred to as a politician and Community Advocate but we know that she does have a Social Work degree!

**Lois Gatley** is known for her work in the domestic violence field and as an advocate for carers.

**Jan McDonagh** is a Senior Child Protection Worker, Family and Domestic Violence, with the Department for Child Protection.