



# *In the Loop Spring 2019*

## **Editorial**

What's in a name, do not social workers do the same job if they are not social workers called? Is this not a question that deserves some thought in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when so few of us retain our professional title? If you work in the Health Department you may still be called a Social Worker but for most of the rest our signature blocks suggest that we might be coordinators (of various specifications), programme managers, case managers, facilitators, clinicians, officers, team leaders, project managers, policy officers, researchers and so on. Does it matter? While I think many of us miss having our professional qualification posted beneath our signature does this diversity of titles not demonstrate the flexibility of our profession that can see us occupying so many different roles? Indeed, the Bard, who taught us so much about the human condition, I think is once again correct. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet" so social workers would still continue to hold their skills and values dear irrespective of what role they currently inhabit. That is where perhaps the risk does lie.

If we forget to keep our professional development up to date and don't always receive the supervision essential to our skill development, are we liable to reduce our professional practice down to the lowest possible common denominator? With significant reductions in budgets for professional development keeping up to date can be a challenge. The general busyness which fills our days may leave little time for reading and staying abreast of the current literature. However, there are some solutions to this dilemma. Taking students is a great way to keep up to date with current trends. Student supervision is a two-way process and generally, you will find that you gain as much from the experience as you give.

If your agency has few funds to contribute to workshops, consider paying the fee yourself and claiming it as a tax deduction. SPSW keeps its training as cost effective as possible but as well as paying for the best speakers in their field we need to pay for venues and catering that support your learning. Free venues can help us keep costs down but they are few and far between, so do let us know if you have access to one, it will give your agency a free place at the workshop we deliver there.

## **SPSW Workshops and Forums Held and Still to come for 2019**

### **Already Presented:**

**Acquired Brain Injury**

**Childhood Trauma Informed Therapy**

**Healing Fear**

**Supervising Staff – Skills for Practice**

**Motivational Interviewing**

**Understanding Complex Anxiety**

**Disorders**

**Elder Protection Forum – Oct 1<sup>st</sup> -  
cancelled due to ill health of one of the  
presenters**

### **Coming Up:**

**Methamphetamines – Impact and**

**Intervention – TBA**

**Disability and the Justice System Forum  
– Oct 15<sup>th</sup>**

**The Perils of Pauline & Paul – Elder**

**Abuse in Our Lifetime – NOV 15**

**Adult Trauma Assessment and  
Intervention – Dec 6<sup>th</sup>**

### **Others to be identified**

For more information or to be placed on the Continuing Education Mailing list contact Dr. Barbara Meddin on [waybob@inet.net.au](mailto:waybob@inet.net.au)

# **SPSW Annual General Meeting**

**Tuesday 22 October 2019**

**commencing at 6.00pm (registration at 5:45 pm)**

**At the Northbridge Hotel 210 Lake Street Northbridge**

**Followed by Dinner in the Restaurant at 7:00pm (Bookings essential). Please RSVP by 5pm Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> October to Amanda Wallace, Executive Officer at [eo@spsw.net.au](mailto:eo@spsw.net.au)**

## **Board Member Profile**

Amanda Perlinski has been a Member of the SPSW Board for around ten years but has to date studiously avoided being the subject of this column. Amanda says that she first thought about becoming a social worker during her high school years when watching "Within These Walls", a television series featuring a prison social worker. It is strange how things work out given how much time I have spent working with people in the justice system over the last 19 years said Amanda.

With social work in mind, Amanda completed an Arts Degree at UWA majoring in Anthropology and with units in English, Politics and Psychology and then completed the two-year Bachelor of Social Work course at UWA. Amanda's final student placement was spent in Fitzroy Crossing working with an Aboriginal community which she found to be an amazing experience but returned to Perth conflicted about her original intention to seek employment working with Aboriginal communities having concluded that this was a role best held by Aboriginal people themselves.

With no clear idea now on which way her social work career should proceed Amanda took a twelve-month locum position with the Division for the Intellectually Handicapped as it was then known (now the Disability Services directorate in the Department of Communities.) Amanda quickly discovered the synergy between her social work values and those of the disability field. She also discovered that disability social work was highly diverse, allowing her to work with all the issues that social workers typically worked with, in their various roles, all in one place but with the added overlay of disability. Consequently, a long career in disability has allowed her to work with grief and loss, empowerment, sexuality, domestic violence, mental health, child development, cultural diversity, substance use, trauma, child and adult protection, deinstitutionalisation and most particularly, justice.

Working with people with disability in the justice system has been a facet of Amanda's role over the last nineteen years. In 2000 Amanda commenced running programmes for men with disabilities who had committed sexual offending. The programmes were a collaboration between the Department of Justice and Disability Services Commission with one worker from each agency facilitating the groups - interagency collaboration before it became a common practice said Amanda. Her case load was also becoming more complex with the advent of Local Area Coordination (LAC) which saw LACs picking up some of the less challenging tasks from social workers. A number of her clients were intersecting the justice system and she found this work particularly interesting.

In 2003 Amanda was again part of a collaboration between the Department of Justice and the Disability Services Commission (DSC) becoming the initial Coordinator of the Intellectual Disability Diversion Programme that was established at the Perth Magistrates Court. This was a great initiative which provided more appropriate options for magistrates dealing with people with disability in the Court and which has continued to date, apparently as the only court list in the world specifically for people with an intellectual disability. Amanda identified a significant number of individuals who were referred to DSC and found eligible for services who had slipped between the gaps and had often spent years in the justice system due to a lack of appropriate supports. Most often these people had indigenous backgrounds which had both masked and contributed to their exceedingly complex issues.

By 2009 Amanda was ready for another challenge and when another interagency project for People with Exceptionally Complex Needs (PECN) was looking for a Coordinator it appeared to be the obvious next step in Amanda's career. The role took her back to working within DSC but with individuals that also interfaced Mental Health Services, the Drug and Alcohol sector; Department of Housing, Department of Corrective Services and the Office of the Public Advocate. She reported monthly to an Inter-agency Executive Committee which unblocked blockages in the system and improved the lives of the participants. The success of the pilot saw an expansion with a second coordinator being appointed and spawned a similar programme for Young People with Exceptionally Complex Needs (YPECN) which sits within the Child Protection and Family Support (CPFS) arm of what is now the Department of Communities. YPECN continues to operate but despite a positive evaluation, PECN itself was abandoned in 2017. During this period Amanda was awarded the Agent of Change Award at the WA Social Worker of the Year Awards and also won a Count Me In Scholarship provided by the Disability Services Commission which facilitated a study of the system

in the UK for people with disability and forensic issues.

In 2017 Amanda moved to the Disability Justice Team within Disability Services which was by then a part of the Department of Communities. Her new role was titled *Disability Justice Prevention and Diversion Officer*, which has been a comfortable fit with her skill set. She also enjoys being a part of a small interdisciplinary team which also comprises three Justice Co-ordinators, five Clinicians, a Director and administrative support with which it attempts to cover the state. The Team also supports the Disability Justice Centre, a ten-bed facility for people with disabilities who are found to be Mentally Impaired Accused with a view to rehabilitating them and returning them to the community.

Amanda continues to work across agencies and develops strategies to reduce the number of people with disabilities intersecting the justice system. Together with other team members Amanda provides training around disability awareness for justice system professionals including correctional staff, police and transit guards. Current projects also include Disability Awareness Training for Peer Support Prisoners which, together with one of the Clinicians, provides prisoners with the information they require to better support their peers with disability within the prison system. Together with one of the Coordinators Amanda has successfully run programmes for people with disability to educate them on what to do when interacting with the police to reduce the likelihood of exacerbating their situation. This programme is called "Getting Arrested-what to do" and can be provided to any groups containing people with disabilities at risk of contact with police. If you are involved in such a group the programme can be arranged by contacting Amanda on 6167 7877. Amanda is also commencing a new pilot in conjunction with the CPFS team at the Perth Children's Court which will facilitate the provision of information about children's disabilities to the Court.

Amanda became involved with the SPSW initially because she recognised that if you are involved with working with risk you should probably have some professional indemnity insurance! She joined the Board because she wanted to give back to the profession which has given her so much over her career.

Amanda says that she has always been inspired to continue to work with the most vulnerable people in the community because they need the most help and seeing even very small changes in their lives can be so rewarding.

Amanda hopes to finish her career within the Disability Justice Team but acknowledges that everything is very uncertain currently with the

changes contributed to by the Machinery of Government changes that have produced the Department of Communities and by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) which have together produced a tsunami of change in the disability field. Who knows where we will end up next queried Amanda who hopes that her current position will remain in place until she is ready to retire and write a book, which she says, will be a crime novel with a difference and some very interesting characters.

As for the SPSW, Amanda hopes that it will continue to grow in strength, especially now it has won the battle for its members to be recognised as qualified to provide services for the NDIS. The SPSW provides such a lot of good professional development opportunities for members and others that it really does deserve to survive and continue to provide training and support to Social Workers in WA.

## WANTED!

SPSW strives to be an inclusive society representing all social workers in Western Australia. To fulfil this aim we are seeking to appoint an **Aboriginal Social Worker** to the SPSW Board. If you can assist us with this please contact [eo@spsw.net.au](mailto:eo@spsw.net.au) or call Barbara Meddin on 0417 959 058

## SPSW Disability Practice Group

It is with great pleasure that we report that our efforts to receive acknowledgement from the NDIS that SPSW members in Western Australia are eligible to provide services have been successful.



Disability Social Workers will find this confirmation in the latest edition of the NDIS Provider Registration Guide, which can be found on page 22 of this document: [https://providertoolkit.ndis.gov.au/sites/default/files/provider\\_registration\\_guide\\_to\\_suitability\\_for\\_wa\\_v1.10.pdf](https://providertoolkit.ndis.gov.au/sites/default/files/provider_registration_guide_to_suitability_for_wa_v1.10.pdf)

Having achieved this goal the group is now working on defining which roles social workers can provide under the NDIS. If you would like to be involved in this process or for further information please contact [Amanda.perlinski@communities.wa.gov.au](mailto:Amanda.perlinski@communities.wa.gov.au)

# Feature Article

SPSW is very proud of the contribution that our members continue to make to the debates in the public domain on social issues. Tori Cooke contributed to the International Women's Day Great Debate in Melbourne and here we reprint her blog:

## International Women's Day 2019 – Balance is Better!

To me, International Women's Day is important because it recognises the full spectrum of women's contribution to the world that in such diverse ways bring 'balance' to the world in which we live, work and play. Part of bringing this much needed balance is challenging structural conformity to male privilege. Diversity and inclusion makes so much sense when we consider what women have achieved historically. It also makes sense for men too. A little more on that later!

### Women's achievements and barriers to achieving

Women's achievements are rarely appreciated within the context of unequal access to higher education, employment and advancement opportunities. This means that on the whole, women are likely to work harder to overcome internal and external barriers in order to achieve success in the first place. Sometimes, the external barrier is, 'the glass ceiling' and unequal pay. It can also be that the structures are designed for a dominant paradigm that excludes the needs of women.

Then there are the internal barriers, the 'soundtracks' women are taught to play in their minds that prevent some women from believing they can achieve the full extent of their potential – leading to over achieving and high levels of stress. These are the ingrained social messages.

For some of us who grew up in lower middle-class families, these were messages that focused on working in a meaningless service job until you found your prince, got married and lived happily ever after. In my family, the women's role was to take care of your husband, the home and raise children. Any employment was usually part time with your pay considered "pocket money".

But listening to the men I work with, tells me too that these social messages can be stressful for some men to live up to. For example; *the provider, the protector, the hero*

*roles* are socially constructed masculine roles that play a part in driving the need for financial and social success for men. The pressure of not living up to or not being able to participate in these roles can lead to a sense of listlessness and despair because access to the economic fortunes deemed socially acceptable and their associated status remain unachieved.

***The key difference is that this still does not impact on men's access to opportunity or their thinking that they deserve opportunity to the same degree as women.***

The fact is, gendered forms of social status were enshrined in legislation and women who sought to contribute in the same way to society and influence were considered highly problematic, simply for challenging the social norms of the day, with ideas of inclusiveness and equality. The few men who shared and collaborated in raising a family were considered 'not real men'.

But without these inspiring influencers, both men and women, we would not have the ongoing discussions, research and movement about the need for gender equity today.

Getting a university degree required overcoming barriers that most men do not have to experience because of what we now know and call structural male privilege. Having worked in the field of family violence with impacted family members and now also with the men who perpetrate abuse, it is clear to me that the attitudes and beliefs inherent in male privilege continue to heavily influence the drivers of violence against women. This violence is also a further barrier to women's access to income equity and long-term financial security. Conversely, the issues of income equity and long-term financial security for women become a cage that lock women into violent relationships.

It is a cycle that is all too often deadly.

### Diversity and Inclusion

This is why diversity and inclusion are important to me – to not to continue to strive for this as an abiding social norm is simply dangerous. Violence against women is now recognised to be a serious and widespread problem in Australia, with enormous individual and community impacts and social costs (Our Watch, 2019). Only recently released, the National Community Attitude survey (NCAS, 2018) results indicate concerns that a substantial minority of

Australians do not believe women's reports of violence. Of even greater concern is the view that this large minority believe the problem of gender inequality is exaggerated (NCAS, 2018).

There are so many ways in which the contributions women have made, within their families, communities and across societies. While, their contributions alone might be worthy of praise, when you consider them in context of the many seen and unseen social barriers they had to overcome, I realise that it may take more than one International Women's Day to fully appreciate their achievements.

For inclusivity to become a valued social norm we simply must address these barriers and work hard to challenge the ingrained ideas that have no relevance for the kinds of futures our daughters and grand-daughters will be living in the next 100 years.

I grew up at a time where it was a challenge to finish high school and have access to higher education. The words of my grandmother often echoed as motivation in my heart, "education will be your liberation" she used to say. I am the first woman in my family to finish high school and the first to finish an undergrad and near completion of a post grad qualification. However, the cost at times of moving past limited ways of viewing women were at times, desperately hard.

Today women are more highly educated than men, yet still earn less.

International Women's Day continues to tell the story of why "balancing is better", why our collaborative work to focus on better access and celebration of diversity is absolutely critical to societies success and an enriched life for each and every one of us.

#### References:

*Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2018). Are we there yet? Australians' attitudes towards violence against women & gender equality: Summary findings from the 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) (Research to policy and practice, 03/2018). Sydney, NSW: ANROWS.*

<https://ncas.anrows.org.au/findings/>

Our Watch. (2019).

The SPSW is planning something special to celebrate both International Women's Day and International Social Work Day in 2020 as they both fall in March. Watch this space for further information in our next edition.

## Poet's Corner

### The Euthanasia Bill (A personal view)

If my cat was very old and in pain  
And all interventions were clearly in vain  
No longer enjoying her cuddles and food  
On her behalf I'd make the decision I should

To make the trip to the vet, that would be her last  
Knowing that her time with me was now past  
Her own physician would put her to sleep  
Though I would grieve, sweet memories I'd keep.

But for me, such gentle passing remains illegal  
I have fewer rights than my cat or a beagle  
Although now a Bill before Parliament sits  
It still won't provide me with such a remit.

So many safeguards that provide me protection  
Also prevent me from making my own election  
If my capacity to decide sadly has failed  
In my mindless body I will remain jailed.

I cannot pass this decision to a guardian to make  
Someone I trust not to make a mistake  
I am doomed to receiving palliative care  
Something I regard as entirely unfair.

And in the event that I just get too old  
I must continue to live on this earth I am told  
Even though I might feel that I'm taking up space  
That might be better used by the human race.

Human life is held sacred by every religion  
And so, although I do not hold this conviction  
My "Human Rights" it would appear to me that  
Provide me with fewer rights than my cat.

Amanda Perlinski

Don't forget that the **SPSW Locum and Employment Register** keeps you up to date with employment opportunities for social workers and is a great way to find the best staff. Contact Barbara Meddin at [waybob@iinet.net.au](mailto:waybob@iinet.net.au) to join or advertise positions.

### Bursary Offered for Aboriginal Social Work Student

The SPSW would like to offer the following bursary to an Aboriginal Social Work Student to assist them in their studies:

- Complimentary Student Membership of the SPSW for twelve months.
- \$500 per year of study towards text books.
- Two free SPSW training events.

To apply for the bursary please send your application, including your CV, proof of course enrolment and two referees to [eo@spsw.net.au](mailto:eo@spsw.net.au)

## Remembering Keith Maine

This obituary was adapted from an original article by Professor Fran Crawford and Roslyn Budd, with contributions from family and former colleagues. The article was published 22 August 2019 in The West Australian Newspaper Digital and Print Editions and has also appeared on the Department of Communities intranet, The Common.

Born: Perth, 1930 Died: Perth, aged 88  
Keith Maine lived his childhood in Kalgoorlie which was then as now a multicultural, multi-class crucible of Australian family life.

When he was 12 his family moved back to Perth, where he had been born on 18 May 1930. Keith graduated from high school to become a clerk with the Commonwealth Public Service. The war had ended and the Federal government offered cadetships to ensure a knowledgeable, effective public service. Keith gained one, focusing on personnel management.

This was to serve him well. He added units at UWA to complete a degree in psychology. With the security of a public service career he married his life partner Bette in 1954 and they lived for four years in Melbourne. Then back to the west and a position as psychologist at the Child Welfare Department. Mentored by then director Jim McCall, Keith served in a range of departments concerned with issues of child development and in 1963 undertook a three-month overseas study tour of the rapidly changing social welfare scene with a focus on evidence-based assessment and treatment of juvenile offenders and disturbed children.

Returning he was charged with designing and directing the Longmore Remand and Assessment Centre, a then “cutting-edge” facility for young offenders.

In 1969 Keith was promoted to assistant director of the Child Welfare Department before becoming director in 1971, a position he held until 1984. This period set the scene for the burgeoning of welfare services in the State, of which Keith led the professional development.

His work encompassed a widening recognition of the need for individualised and responsive services for children in care, protection of children from abuse, services to support the development of mining communities and inclusion of Aboriginal people in mainstream public services with the

amalgamation of the Child Welfare and Native Welfare departments under the Community Welfare Act of 1972.

He crafted a culture of training and local research at all levels and across staff and volunteers. A parent help centre, child abuse unit, crisis care, extension of the Homemaker’s Scheme, the first national conference on child abuse, social policy planning unit, community services training centre and collaboration with other States’ welfare administrators were just a few initiatives implemented under Keith’s leadership.

In 1987, Keith went to part-time employment and worked on several tasks requested by government including as chairman of a Police/Aboriginal relations board. Keith fully retired in 1995 but continued in various voluntary capacities.

He died on the morning of his birthday in 2018. His beloved Bette had died in 2014. They are survived by three children, Paul, Mark and Michaela, their partners and loving grandchildren.

His funeral service was testimony to the strength of his achievements and continuing regard and respect for him. As well as family and friends there was a strong representation of the people who had served with him in the 60s, 70s and 80s. They comprised former senior head office staff to former field officers. Many, who could not attend, sent condolences read out at the service. More than one referred to their experience of Keith’s treatment of them early in their career, often as mail clerks, “as though I had some importance”.

Keith is also remembered for his holiday tours across the Murchison, Pilbara and Kimberley where staff were invited to gather around the camp fire outside Keith and Bette’s caravan. They took the time to informally connect with local issues and concerns. This integrity, commitment and openness to listening accomplished much and was one of Keith’s leadership strengths. It was a good life well spent.

***Advocacy Re Recognition of Social Workers who are Members of the Society of Professional Social Workers is always provided by the Society. For an example see the letter attached to In the Loop***

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