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PREVIEW

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NEXT EDITION

Contributions for the Spring 2019 issue will be accepted until 3 September. The theme is **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work**.

AASW members whose articles are published in *Social Work Focus* can claim time spent to research and prepare them towards CPD requirements, specifically Category 3. We accept up to 10 articles in line with each issue's social work theme.

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Communications Lead

Kerry Kustra
Publications Officer

Clare Tilbury, Christine Bigby, Mark Hughes and Mike Fisher
Guest Editors

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The AASW respectfully acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians, and pays its respects to Elders past and present.

Join us on social media:



Research

Communicating to social workers about challenging inequality

I am so very pleased to see this edition of *Focus* – ‘focusing’ on social work research. All areas of social work practice are important, and doing good research and disseminating the findings, is one of the most effective ways to communicate what we know and the great work that is being done.

Social workers are good at ‘doing’ and we ‘do’ amazing work. Social workers develop programs and ways of working with services users and communities that are new, nuanced, imaginative, empowering, inclusive and successful – and yet we rarely take time (and I do know that you have to have time to take time) to sit, reflect, research, evaluate, write and disseminate the fantastic work that is being done. We are ‘thinkers’ and ‘doers’ – but we need to become better at communicating the work we do and the successes we have.

I know there are many obstacles. I often hear of terrific work being done by social workers in agencies and I talk to them about writing this up so others can become informed, or maybe recognise solutions or possible ways forward when dealing with like-minded issues. The first thing I hear is the lack of confidence in practitioners to conduct research or evaluation. The fear seems to be that what they could offer would not be good enough, articulate enough, academic enough. I always point out possible solutions to this.

I tell them to have a look at the practitioner articles in publications such as *Social Work Focus* and start there to begin building up their confidence. I point to the Practice, Policy and Perspectives papers that are often featured in *Australian Social Work* journal and encourage them to think of writing a piece like that with colleagues to build up their confidence. I talk to them about partnering with someone who is publishing on similar work or a similar issue. Chances are that an academic publishing in the same area

will jump at the chance to work with a practitioner who has their ear closer to the ground.

I am now talking to social workers about making time to come to the AASW Conference 2019 being held 7-9 November in Adelaide. As with our last conference, our terrific Research Committee is running workshops and ‘how to do’s’ on social work research. The energy and commitment of that Committee and their desire to share their knowledge and increase the profile of social work research is contagious. This year’s theme on Challenging Inequality has meant that many practitioners are taking the opportunity to present and talk about the work they are doing and the ways in which they are challenging inequality. These papers and this work need to be communicated to social workers (and others) far and wide – and research and evaluation is a terrific avenue for this.

I hear from practitioners that what they do is hard to measure, and this is true at times. I remember thinking myself – how do I convey the overwhelming sense of accomplishment when a service user overcomes a debilitating anxiety, or when they begin to understand the contribution of structural oppression to the situation they are now facing and the ways in which this systemic abuse has exacerbated, heightened and played on their emotions? We know that some traditions of scientific research don’t lend themselves easily to the questions we want to answer, but partnering up with a seasoned social work researcher, or even having a consultation with someone who ‘thinks’

research, will assist with these issues. Student placements are a terrific way to connect with a university and begin on a research journey.

We need to be writing about our work. We need to discuss, reflect, ask questions, research and evaluate what we are doing in all the areas we are working in. We see other professions encroaching on some of our core business and claiming it as their own because we are not researching and publishing as we need to be doing and they take up this space.

Social work education has more of an emphasis on research practice and skills now than ever before – and new social workers look to those before them to help them build on these skills. We all need to build these skills.

The more social work research I see and read, the better I am at defining what it is that social workers do, and the easier it is for me to whip out data and strong arguments in discussions with other professions for all manner of reasons and advocacy. The more social work research I see and read, the more I know we are taken seriously. We need to prioritise the time in our working lives to think this way – for ourselves, for our colleagues and our profession, and for those we work with, whose voices are silenced or absent.

•



CHRISTINE CRAIK
AASW National President

Challenging Inequality

Working together for a just society



CINDY SMITH
Chief Executive Officer

We have been very pleased with the response to the theme of this year's conference, **Challenging Inequality: Working together for a just society**, with more than 200 abstracts received. Our program committee is currently putting the finishing touches to the program and will put together what promises to be our best and biggest conference yet.

We are excited about our line-up of inspirational speakers, including Natasha Stott Despoja AO, our dinner speaker Debbie Kilroy, Professor Tom Calma AO, co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, and International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) United Nations Commissioner Priska Fleischlin, who will join us via video link from Switzerland.

The [conference program](#) is now available, and we are busy promoting the rich and diverse presentations on offer. We encourage you to ask your employer to support you in attending the conference. Among the resources on the conference website, on the Registrations page under [Why Attend](#), there is a template and a cost sheet you can provide to your manager to support payment or subsidy of the cost.

There are so many reasons to attend this conference, including that a large portion of your CPD requirements will be met in one place, new ideas to share and take back with you, and the networking opportunities. There will also be a social program, and of course, things to see and do in the beautiful city of Adelaide before and after the conference.

Members recently participated in two surveys – one on AASW communications and a separate one regarding the website. Thank you to all members who participated; your responses will inform our next communications strategy. We have a lot of exciting developments in store, including making a significant

investment in our systems to ensure our website and communications are up-to-date, integrated, accessible and efficient.

We have now moved into the election period for 2019. There are three Board Director vacancies to be filled. In addition, each state has a vacancy for the Branch Management Committee Vice President, plus at least four positions on each Branch Management Committee.

Candidates for the 2019 Board and Branch Management Committee elections have been declared by the Returning Officer and voting opens on 12 September, closing on 3 October. Please keep an eye out for Election bulletins in your email.

AASW is a company limited by guarantee, governed by the regulator, the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC). Being an officer of a company comes with responsibilities. Board directors, for example, have legal and fiduciary responsibility. BMC members are required to abide by our Constitution, By-Laws and Policies.

It is also important for members to ask questions and participate in the election process. We will provide a Facebook Group and online voting to aid this. This is your Association; be part of the decision to choose who will govern and guide the Association into the future.

We have begun the work of revising the *Code of Ethics*. Consultation with members will take place,

including via surveys, webinars and panels. The *Code of Ethics* is one of the most accessed documents on our website and it is important to update it accordingly. Social media, smartphones and apps, for example, were not as widely used in 2010 when the *Code of Ethics* was last revised and we receive many ethics enquiries relating to the storage and transmission of information on these devices. An updated *Code of Ethics* will be revised to address these issues.

An important matter to update our members on is our progress towards professional registration in South Australia. To this end there will be two webinars – one in August, in Melbourne, and another in October, in Canberra, to discuss this subject in detail. I will be joined by Board Director Anita Phillips, who has long campaigned on this issue.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *Social Work Focus* on social work research and its impacts. Social work research will be on full display at the conference and it is vitally important that we put research into practice, so that we all feel its positive impact.

Looking forward to speaking to members through the webinars and at the conference.



Advancing social work research

CLARE TILBURY, CHRISTINE BIGBY, MARK HUGHES AND MIKE FISHER

The profile of social work research has increased enormously in recent years, along with the rise of evidence-based practice and research mindedness and the increasing sophistication of research methods employed by social work academics.

The need for social workers to use research in their practice – to demonstrate effectiveness of interventions or programs, to understand the lived experiences of clients and communities, to underpin the reform of policies and services – has never been more evident.

Yet there remain challenges for advancing social work research in Australia. In some fields of practice, there has been a lack of information about the unique contribution social work research has made, and can make, to improving people's lives. Social work has not been as successful as some other disciplines (e.g. policy and administration) in gaining nationally competitive research funding. And we need to better support and reward social work research activities in both practice and university settings.

In this edition of *Social Work Focus*, we have brought together a collection of articles that not only speak to these challenges, but also highlight the strengths of, and opportunities for, social work research.

The impetus for the special issue came from our Australian Research Council project on Advancing Social Work Research (DP170102142). The project initially set about mapping the scope and quality of published social work research in three fields: disability, child protection, and ageing and aged care.

Despite considerable variation across these fields, we found some common features of social work research publications. Many authors only published once in those fields, most articles were in non-social work journals, most social work authors published with people from other disciplines and most publications were in international journals. Despite substantial research on clients' lived experiences, there was not a lot of published research that employed a co-design or co-creation model.

We also investigated the impact of social work research on service user and community wellbeing, new or changed policies or legislation, and new or improved services. We did this by developing 12 detailed case studies that explored the impact of successful

programs of research, some of which are reported in this special issue.

These case studies illustrated that productive researchers are externally oriented from the outset: they all aimed for their research to improve the conditions of the people they were researching. Highlighting the diverse ways that this research brought about or contributed to change in policies, programs and practice illustrated the alignment between social work research impact and the current government focus on improving the engagement and non-academic impact of university research.

Social work research that has real-world impact is almost always achieved by strong partnerships and longstanding relationships between university researchers and government and community services organisations. This point was brought home to us by the interviews we conducted with research end users – the practitioners, policymakers and managers who use social work research.

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CONTINUED



Advancing Social Work Research Project

Aim: To enhance the conceptual, methodological, and empirical understandings of the distinctive nature of social work research and its contribution to human services policy and practice.

Research questions:

- What is the scope and quality of social work research in the human service fields of child protection, aged care and disability in Australia?
- What are the strengths and limitations of this body of research?
- What is the impact of social work research on human services delivery in the selected fields?
- What strategies can advance social work and human service research productivity, uptake and impact in Australia?

Participating universities: Griffith University, La Trobe University, Southern Cross University, University of Bedfordshire

www.griffith.edu.au/criminology-institute/our-research/our-projects/social-work-research

These people told us how much they valued social work research to inform the policies, programs, advocacy, and interventions they were developing. They noted that academic publication and credibility enhanced the capacity of researchers to influence policy and practice. They also highlighted the need for more community participation in research processes and their expectations that university researchers make their findings accessible with implications for practice made clear.

We're now in the final year of the project and the focus is collaborating with others to develop an agenda for social work research in Australia. We'll be interviewing researchers from diverse fields of practice, and consulting with practitioners and other stakeholders. We hope that the articles in this special issue will spark your interest and enthusiasm for social work research. And we encourage you to join the conversation about an agenda to advance social work research in this country. You can do this by emailing: c.tilbury@griffith.edu.au with 'advancing social work research' in the subject header.

World Refugee Day

A new parliament, a new opportunity



On World Refugee Day, 20 June, the AASW urged the new parliament to fulfil its human rights commitments and give immediate attention to stopping the continued mistreatment and neglect of people seeking asylum and people who have been assessed as refugees, both offshore and onshore.

AASW National President Christine Craik said on World Refugee Day, 'A new parliament represents a new opportunity to break with Australia's recent past treatment of refugees, and usher in policies that are in line with our international human rights obligations.'

'It is disappointing to see that the Australian government's most explicit policy concerning people seeking asylum since becoming elected is to repeal the Medevac Bill, a hard-won policy at the end of the last Parliament.'

The only policies concerning refugees have been the cuts to services in the last budget. Prior to the election, the federal budget reduced spending on two important programs for refugees.

By extending the amount of time before refugees must engage with employment services, the government will save \$78 million. This cut is in addition to the two per cent reduction in settlement services that was also announced in the budget. Together, these changes have forced many to turn to the charity sector for support.

'Meanwhile, \$200 million was spent to reopen Christmas Island, which has no asylum seekers on it. Minister for Home Affairs Peter Dutton confirmed this at the election,' Christine said in June.

Since the Morrison government was elected, there have been reports of 70 suicide and self-harm attempts by 50 people on Manus Island and Nauru.

Christine said that the purpose of the Medevac Bill is to make sure people get the treatment they need. If Australia is to be a leader in human rights, we need to make sure that happens.

'As social workers, we know that the presence of community-wide hopelessness is damaging to mental health and wellbeing - in fact, it is often fatal. Asylum seekers held without charge for six years, and counting, are experiencing this sense of hopelessness. Just last week, Manus Governor Charlie Benjamin called on our government to remove the remaining men from Manus Island,' she said.

'Now is the time for the government to stop stoking fear and racism and uphold the meaning of Australia's signature to the Refugee Convention - we must show that we are "with refugees", as this year's theme proclaims.

'We implore the government to reverse these cruel policies and make sure that Australia once again leads the world in human rights.

'We must always remember, seeking asylum is a human right.'

Keeping Kids Central training

A child-centred approach



Do you come into contact with children and young people affected by domestic violence? Keeping Kids Central, a free online training program can enhance your skills in adopting a child-centred approach.

The program, developed by the Institute of Child Protection Studies, is built on values that respect the safety, wellbeing and rights of children and young people and that support the responsibility of organisations to build child-safe environments.

Keeping Kids Central is recommended for practitioners who work with families, children and young people affected by domestic violence. The program is also suitable for program

leaders who lead the implementation of a child-safe environment.

You can choose which modules to complete and focus on your specific learning needs:

- understanding the nature and dynamics of domestic and family violence
- building practice skills
- developing inclusive services for children from diverse backgrounds

- supporting children and young people to flourish
- leading your organisation in adopting child-centred policies and practices.

To find out more email Program Manager Jacqui Stewart at icps@acu.edu.au or download the brochure from the [Safeguarding Children website](#).

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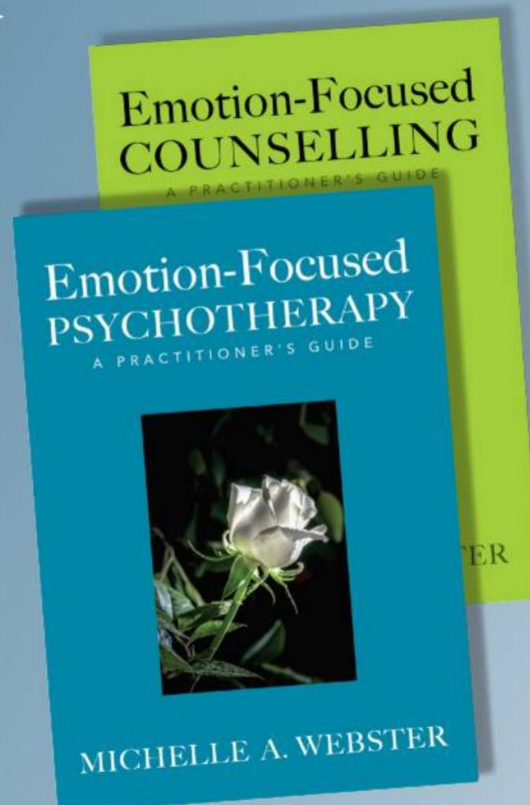
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– Leslie S. Greenberg, PhD

Required reading for practitioners with a passion
– Marie-Thérèse Proctor, PhD



The Emotion-Focused approach has now been developed into a long-term psychotherapy to restore the authentic self and to heal the inner child. This involves emotional processing, re-experiencing in regression, and a therapeutic relationship, both real and symbolic.



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www.Annandale.net.au

The AASW National Research Committee

Promoting a culture of research in social work

BY ANTHEA VREUGDENHIL

The AASW National Research Committee provides leadership, coordination and strategic focus in research that promotes the mission of the AASW. The convenor of the committee, Anthea Vreugdenhil, provides an insider's view of the work of the committee and discusses some ways you can become involved in research through the AASW.

The AASW National Research Committee: Who are we?

The committee comprises up to 12 AASW members (all volunteers) who are passionate about social work research. We represent a cross-section of fields of practice and we all have significant research experience. Some of us work in research organisations (including universities), some run research consultancies and others are in direct service delivery roles. The work of the committee is supported by AASW staff members.

CURRENT NRC MEMBERS:

- | Anthea Vreugdenhil (convenor)
- | Gregory Armstrong
- | Janice Brown
- | Sue Gillieatt
- | Elizabeth Hemphill
- | Helen Hickson
- | Kim Hobbs
- | Abul Khan
- | Elizabeth Orr
- | Rosemarie Tweedie
- | Louise Whitaker

What does the research committee do?

The committee promotes a culture of research among social workers, building opportunity and capacity for social work research. We meet by teleconference each month but most of our work happens between meetings. Fortunately, this is a very collegial committee and there is never a shortage of willing volunteers for tasks on our 'to do' list.

The committee has three main roles, as set out in our Terms of Reference: (i) review and promote proposals to conduct research involving the AASW; (ii) provide consultation regarding research involving the AASW; and (iii) promote a culture of research within social work. Across these roles, we also work to contribute to the decolonisation agenda in social work, and social work research.



Anthea Vreugdenhil is Associate Professor in Social Work at the University of Tasmania and convenor of the AASW National Research Committee. Anthea's research agenda focuses on an ethic of care, particularly in the areas of ageing and dementia.

How can you participate in research projects – and count it towards your CPD?

The committee promotes and encourages social workers' involvement in research. One way we do this is to assess applications from researchers seeking to recruit research participants through advertising their projects to AASW members. The committee ensures that the research projects are of value to social work, are consistent with AASW strategy and principles, meet an acceptable standard of research design and have appropriate ethics approval.

Approved research projects are promoted in the e-Bulletin and on the AASW website. Participating in research is considered a professional development activity and can be counted towards your annual CPD. You may also have seen our 'Pathways into Research' presentations, available through the AASW's online training platform, SWOT.

Have you considered applying for an AASW Practitioner Research Grant?

The committee supports and develops social work research capacity and impact through initiatives such as the AASW Practitioner Research Grant scheme. The grant scheme encourages social work practitioners to develop and implement a research project that will contribute to the evidence-base of social work. Each year, a \$5000 grant is awarded through a competitive application process. The Grant round is advertised through the AASW e-Bulletin each year.

Over the last five years, funded practitioner research projects have:

- Explored how trauma-informed care is implemented in practice within child and family services in the Australian context
- Investigated the psychosocial stressors on family members caring for a person who has sustained a traumatic brain injury because of an assault
- Sought to obtain children's feedback on child-friendly practices used in family reunification
- Researched the social work role when working with people who have palliative care needs through an action research project
- Explored the lived experiences, narratives and perspectives of grandparents who had been separated from, had lost contact with, or were denied ongoing relationships with their grandchildren.

Link to AASW website for more information about these and other practitioner research projects: www.aasw.asn.au/practitioner-resources/aasw-research-grants

Contact the AASW National Research Committee if you would like to find out more about our work, please email: research@aasw.asn.au

World Elder Abuse Awareness Day 2019

AASW renews call for a significant investment in aged care workforce



Stopping elder abuse requires immediate action. This starts with adequate resourcing, and training of the aged care workforce to be able to better identify the dynamics, attitudes and behaviours that lead to elder abuse.

Elder abuse is a crime and it is important that the aged care sector be able to recognise its many forms, including emotional and financial abuse. The AASW will raise these points in its submission to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety, as social workers every day across Australia work to prevent, identify and stop elder abuse.

United Nations World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 15 June, is marked each year to highlight this important issue. UN estimates are that, globally, one in six elderly people have experienced abuse. Elder abuse is a contravention of human rights and has significant impacts on mental, physical and emotional health.

AASW National President Christine Craik said on the eve of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, 'Our members have raised significant concerns about the general lack of respect that we are seeing shown to older people in our society and therefore any intervention needs a whole-of-society approach.'

'While the Royal Commission is concentrating on the aged care sector specifically, it is important to remember that elder abuse occurs throughout the community, including in people's homes.'

'The National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians and the Royal Commission have started the important work of system reform,' Christine said, 'including raising awareness, increasing accountability, building the workforce and strengthening support services. These are all welcome steps. However, more resourcing and the quality of that resourcing of the sector is essential in ultimately addressing issues within the aged care sector, which the Royal Commission is currently uncovering.'

Christine pointed out that two in three people receiving aged care services are women and it is important that the gendered dimension of elder abuse is also recognised as a form of family violence.

'Women of this generation, in addition to generally living slightly longer than men, have also often lived a life of giving to others, which can mean they have less material wealth, making them more dependent on others and less likely to feel empowered to do anything about abuse directed at them.'

'The Royal Commission is revealing the need for a highly resourced, trained and regulated workforce, as well as a more accountable and robust aged care sector,' she said.

A career in social work research

Profile of Abul Khan PhD

Dr Abul Khan, a senior mental health clinician, was recently appointed to the AASW National Research Committee. Here he outlines his career as a social worker and researcher.



Dr Abul Khan is a clinical social worker with more than 22 years of experience in practice, teaching and research, both in Australia and internationally. He is a member of the Australian College of Social Work in Mental Health Clinical Specialist division and has recently joined the AASW National Research Committee. He is also Adjunct Senior Lecturer of Monash University, Melbourne.

Abul's doctorate from James Cook University, Townsville, was on the topic 'Re-visioning child protection management embedded in family empowerment'. The thesis, he explains, offers a new perspective in debate about the increasing negative impact of current risk-averse forensic practice culture. Research for his masters degree was undertaken at Queen's University in Belfast on an international comparative study of substance abuse management in India and the United Kingdom.

Abul has had a varied career, having worked in the areas of substance misuse, rural community development, child protection and child and adolescent mental health. He has taught graduate students in sociology and social work, and managed capacity-building training camps in remote rural areas. In the United Kingdom he worked for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), a specialist child protection assessment team, writing comprehensive parenting capacity reports.

Abul is passionate about his advocacy for capacity building of frontline child protection practitioners as prerequisite for introducing family-empowerment-focused practice in public child protection systems. He has published papers in the areas of mental health and child protection.

In an effort to integrate his research into practice development, Abul has developed a unique specialist training model for frontline child protection

practitioners based on the findings of his doctoral research (Khan et al., 2018), which studies the scope of a family empowerment centred approach in child protection practice. The research articulates a link between the process of building family-empowerment-focused practice and the empowerment needs of frontline practitioners amid a broader environment, such as team culture and system. The specialist training model was trialled through a series of three workshops held late last year and early this year with forty statutory child protection practitioners in Victoria. Abul says the feedback from the workshops was overwhelmingly positive.

The workshop sessions offered the participants tools on how to think in-depth on their professional developmental needs against the impact of ongoing occupational and related mental health challenges. It is expected that these intensive professional development sessions will not only build new insight into empowerment needs of the practitioners but add fresh perspectives into child protection service development, such as practice capacity, team culture and frontline leadership capacity building.

Abul is in a process of expanding the scope of his training for promoting practice skills and emotional wellbeing of frontline child protection practitioners working in the community (i.e. intake, investigation, prevention, foster and kinship care) and out-of-home care settings as well as in the Youth Justice system.

The project aims at empowering practitioners and case managers informed by cutting edge research and practice literature as well as using clinical approaches to build confidence and resilience in their engagement with vulnerable families, children and young people and key stakeholders.



AASW Conference 2019

After receiving a record number of abstracts, we are delighted to confirm a sensational line up of keynote speakers who will set the tone for a varied and enriching program.

Our Keynote Speakers will be Natasha Stott Despoja AO, Professor Tom Calma AO and Priska Fleischlin. Our Dinner Speaker is Debbie Kilroy.

The AASW Conference 2019 will bring together a diverse range of speakers focusing on a wide range of themes in relation to challenging inequality. Sessions will focus on Indigenous justice, ageing, climate change, disability, family violence, health, mental health, housing poverty and the social work profession to name a few. The themes will also provide a variety of perspectives including practice, policy, research and education. [See our program.](#)

Be inspired, make a difference, discover the latest products and services and network with like-minded professionals who are all working towards Challenging Inequality.

If you wish to pitch the conference to your employer, why not use the resources we have developed to help you on the website under [Why Attend?](#)

The AASW Conference 2019 will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre, South Australia from 7-9 November. [Register on the conference website today.](#)

Join us in Adelaide and let us all work together, collaboratively, to challenge inequality.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Natasha Stott Despoja AO

Natasha Stott Despoja AO was made an Officer of the Order of Australia in the 2019 Queen's Birthday honours, for distinguished service to the global community as an advocate for gender equality, which is work she has done since she left Parliament in 2008



Professor Tom Calma AO

Prof. Calma is an Aboriginal Elder from the Kungarakana tribal group and a member of the Iwaidja tribal group whose traditional lands are south-west of Darwin and on the Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory, respectively. He is a social work and community development graduate from the South Australian Institute of Technology (now UniSA). Tom has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, community, state, national and international level. He has worked in the public sector for over 45 years and is currently the Chancellor of the University of Canberra.



Priska Fleischlin

Priska Fleischlin is the International Federation of Social Workers' (IFSW) United Nations (UN) Commissioner. Her main responsibilities are to build IFSW capacity, by securing a global team with sub-teams in each region and the UN headquarters. Recognition of the contribution of social workers within UN agencies is growing. She will join us via videolink from Switzerland.

Natasha Stott Despoja AO and Debbie Kilroy appear by arrangement with Saxton Speakers Bureau.

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Debbie Kilroy to address conference dinner

You are invited to join Debbie Kilroy, our inspirational dinner speaker at the AASW Conference 2019. Debbie is well-placed to speak at our conference dinner on **Challenging Inequality: Working together for a just society**.

Dubbed 'Lady Justice', Debbie was featured earlier this year on [Australian Story](#) when she mounted a spur-of-the-moment crowd-funding campaign to pay off the court debts of Aboriginal women incarcerated in Western Australia for defaulting on fines, leading to women in prison being released.

After her own release from prison in 1992, Debbie established Sisters Inside to fight for the human rights of women in prison and to address gaps in services available to women and their children. Since then, Debbie has completed tertiary qualifications in social work, forensic mental health and law. Debbie is the first prisoner to be admitted as a legal practitioner in Australia.

As the CEO of Sisters Inside, Debbie is a tireless advocate for the rights and interests of women and actively works to end violence and dismantle the prison industry. Debbie has spearheaded numerous ground-breaking programs to break the cycle of imprisonment. Debbie uses her position to empower criminalised women and girls to have their voices, interests and priorities heard. Debbie is passionate about supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls to become leaders.

Book your table at our conference dinner today.

AASW Conference 2019

Questions for Natasha Stott Despoja AO

Congratulations on your recent Queen's Birthday honour, which you received for distinguished service to the global community as an advocate for gender equality.

Thank you for this kind acknowledgement. I feel very grateful to have my work on gender equality – both in Australia and overseas – recognised in this way.

Australia has 80 per cent of its international development work aimed at addressing gender equality, in a world where very few countries have that target. Why is achieving gender equality so important to challenging inequality more broadly?

No one country has achieved gender equality. Yet, no country or community, regardless of its circumstances, can reach its full potential while drawing on the skills of only half its population.

Gender equality and achieving equality more generally are inextricably linked. For example, 70 per cent of the people in the world living in poverty are women and 64 per cent of the world's illiterate adult population are women. Women and children are so often among the most marginalised and discriminated against people on earth.

Despite enormous progress, the issues facing women and girls remain a great human rights challenge for our world. Worldwide, women are far more likely to experience violence and abuse. Women are far more likely to be economically dependent, and work in vulnerable, low-paid and undervalued jobs. Women and children are far more likely to bear the cost of water, food and fuel insecurity. And women and children are far more likely to die as a result of natural disasters.

When we invest and support women, communities benefit. For example, we know that women reinvest 90 per cent of their income back into the household, whereas men reinvest only 30 to 40 per cent. When women have more influence over economic decisions, their families allocate more income to food, health, education, children's clothing and children's nutrition.

Gender equality is not only a pressing moral and social issue it's a critical economic challenge. According to McKinsey economists, if each country matched the progress towards gender parity of its fastest-moving regional neighbour, global GDP could increase by up to US\$12 trillion, or 11 per cent, in 2025.

In a 'full potential' scenario, where women played an identical role in labour markets to that of men, as much as US\$28 trillion, or 26 per cent, could be added to global GDP by 2025.

So there are clear benefits for countries and their economies by addressing the social and other injustices that women face.

When we invest and support women, communities benefit

We are excited to have you as the Keynote Speaker at AASW Conference 2019. How do you view the role of social workers in challenging inequality and the importance of this role?

I am excited and honoured to be a part of this conference, especially one that recognises and celebrates a profession that I admire greatly. Social work helps humanity to achieve functioning communities and social wellbeing.

It is critical to a fair and harmonious society. As your own vision articulates, social justice, human rights, collective responsibility and respect for diversities are all a part of social work.

My contact with social workers – be it in a collective sense through my various roles or through the work of friends and colleagues who are social workers – highlights a profession that cares about people and about social justice in society.

Social workers often deal with some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged in our community. They deserve our respect and support.

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We would like to acknowledge and thank our sponsors and exhibitors for supporting the AASW Conference 2019. Their support is valued and recognised, and together, we are the voice of our profession and drive the social work sector forward.



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An Australian recruitment agency and family-owned, McArthur celebrates its 50th birthday in 2019. McArthur is a prominent national recruitment company, working with over 6,000 temporary staff and places over 1,000 permanent and executive staff throughout Australia. Our Human Services Division is over 12 years in operation and in most recent years has established itself as a lead agency in statutory social work, case management and counselling recruitment in Australia. McArthur also played a key role in supporting and professionalising the social policy arena, partnering with governments, universities and the AASW, and offering a strategic voice to the development of social work and case management workforce across Australia. Currently McArthur specialises in recruiting and placing masters and degree qualified social work, mental health and case management practitioners and practice leaders, and supplying support workers in youth and justice contexts to social and community based not for profit agencies and government departments.

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EXHIBITORS



Mount Sinai international leadership program

Future directions in robotics and cultural exchange

CANDICE CARE-UNGER AND DAVID KERR

At Mount Sinai Hospital, the program participants meet with leaders from the hospital, community-based organisations and graduate schools of social work, to enhance their leadership ability, strengthen management and research skills, and build upon global social work relationships.

Gordon, Green, Whitwam, Epstein, & Bernstein, 2018

The Mount Sinai International Enhancement of Social Work Leadership Program brings four to six social workers from several countries each year to the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York City. Candice Care-Unger and David Kerr, the 2018 scholars from Australia, share their experience.

The program was developed in 1988, and it was an honour to participate in the program in its 30th year. The 2018 group included social workers from Israel, Singapore and Australia.

The social work department at Mount Sinai has more than 650 people in it. Having the opportunity to be with the team leaders and the senior leadership group was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, and the learnings have been enormous and continue. We had the opportunity to spend time with incredible social work leaders such as Dr Susan Bernstein, who reminded us that having empathy towards your client group and towards your organisation is needed in leadership. These leaders also reminded us that relationships are key to leadership. The leadership learnings we took away frequently enter our minds in our day-to-day practice.

For six weeks we lived, worked, studied and explored New York City together. We came away from the experience with a deep appreciation for the things we often take for granted here in Australia. Things such as universal health care and affordable private health insurance, which offer us choice and access to world-class services. Legislative entitlements such as maternity leave, annual leave that rolls over from year to year, and long service leave entitlements that make our working conditions in Australia unbelievably different to those of the USA.

Candice was a guest at one of the graduate schools of social work for a Saturday afternoon class where we talked about services and systems in Australia. When carer payments and allowances from Centrelink were discussed one student commented in

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Seeing the robotics, bionics and assistive technology available in standard rehabilitation units was exciting. It highlighted the opportunities for future directions for us here in Australia



surprise, 'What? Your government pays people to look after their own relative?' Although unpaid caregivers provide an enormous contribution to society the Carer Allowance has always seemed insufficient. Suddenly, it seemed special and highlighted how advanced Australia is to have in place no-fault schemes such as iCare and the NDIS, which seem generations away for the Americans.

Aside from deep gratitude and appreciation for what we have in Australia, we came away inspired by what we saw in New York. We had the opportunity to spend a day in a clinical interest area, which for us was rehabilitation. Seeing the robotics, bionics and assistive technology available in standard rehabilitation units was exciting. It highlighted the opportunities for future directions for us here in Australia.

The personal and professional growth we have undergone has been unquantifiable. Almost a year after the Mount Sinai program there are still moments of inspiration from the experience that come at unexpected times. The opportunity we had to spend time in all different clinical areas highlighted the transferability of social work skills and provided a unique opportunity to learn about hundreds of health conditions we may not normally be exposed to in our daily roles.

Candice was inspired by the transgender and sexual health services. Mount Sinai modelled inclusion and diversity in the services they provided,

the clinicians they employed and the way facilities were environmentally presented. This inspired her to return to university this year to complete postgraduate study in sexual health and reproduction.

A tip for anyone who might participate in the program in future - keep a diary! A daily reflective journal even 12 months later will transport you straight back to a time where intellectual stimulation was so high it can spark a creative thought, a possible innovative opportunity or even just perspective for a bigger picture.

The Mount Sinai International Enhancement of Social Work Leadership Program is a career highlight for all who have the privilege to attend; a privilege that we will both be forever grateful.

Candice Care-Unger is the Professional Leader of Social Work at Royal Rehab in Sydney.

David Kerr is the Chief Social Worker at Wimmera Health Care Group.



Left to right: Sagit (Israel), David (Australia), Candice (Australia), Gin (Singapore), Kayai (Singapore)

For more information about the program, future opportunities to attend the program and application details contact Helen Cleak h.cleak@qut.edu.au



2019 Trauma Education

presented by Dr Leah Giarratano

Leah is a doctoral-level clinical psychologist and author with 24 years of clinical and teaching expertise in CBT and traumatology

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One new, and four revised, trauma texts by Leah are now available

Clinical skills for treating post-traumatic stress disorder

Treating PTSD: Day 1 - 2

This two-day (8:30am-4:30pm) program presents a highly practical and interactive workshop (case-based) for treating traumatised clients; the content is applicable to both adult and adolescent populations. The techniques are cognitive behavioural, evidence-based, and will be immediately useful and effective for your clinical practice. The emphasis is upon imparting immediately practical skills and up-to-date research in this area. **In order to attend Treating Complex Trauma, participants must have first completed this 'Treating PTSD' program.**

31 Oct – 1 Nov 2019, Brisbane CBD
7 – 8 November 2019, Sydney CBD
21 -22 November 2019, Melbourne CBD
28 – 29 May 2020, Auckland CBD
11 – 12 June 2020, Perth CBD
18 – 19 June 2020, Adelaide CBD

Clinical skills for treating complex traumatisation

Treating Complex Trauma: Day 3 - 4

This two-day (8:30am-4:30pm) program focuses upon phase-based treatment for survivors of child abuse and neglect. This workshop completes Leah's four-day trauma-focused training. The content is applicable to both adult and adolescent populations. The program incorporates practical, current experiential techniques showing promising results with this population; techniques are drawn from Emotion focused therapy for trauma, Metacognitive therapy, Schema therapy, Attachment pathology treatment, Acceptance and commitment therapy, Cognitive behaviour therapy, and Dialectical behaviour therapy.

14 - 15 November 2019, Sydney CBD
28 - 29 November 2019, Melbourne CBD
25 – 26 June 2020, Auckland CBD
20 - 21 August 2020, Brisbane CBD
3 - 4 September 2020, Perth CBD
10 - 11 September 2020, Adelaide CBD

Program fee for each activity

Early Bird \$795 each.
Register more than three months prior to the workshop date

Normal Fee \$895 each.
Register less than three months prior to the workshop date

Pairs Discount \$1,490. Pay for Days 1-4 in one transaction

Pay in 2- 3 instalments by bank transfer. Minimum four months prior to workshop.

Program fee includes GST, program materials, lunches, morning and afternoon teas on both workshop days.

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SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH AND ITS IMPACTS



AASW PRACTITIONER RESEARCH GRANT 2018/19

The AASW Practitioner Research Grant for the financial year 2018/19 was awarded to the research partnership: Ray Araullo, Deputy Director, Social Work Department, Royal North Shore Hospital; Kim Hobbs, Clinical Specialist Social Worker, Westmead Hospital; and Dr Rosalie Pockett, Sydney School of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney.

Since 2010, the AASW has offered an annual Practitioner's Grant of \$5000 for AASW members who are not in formal research institutions to assist them in meeting the costs of conducting a research project. It is an initiative of the National Research Committee and applications are called for midyear.

The AASW is committed to promoting a culture of research and knowledge building within the profession and practitioner research provides an important contribution to the evidence and knowledge base of social work. For more information about the Grant: <https://www.aasw.asn.au/practitioner-resources/aasw-research-grants>

Social work interventions in cancer care

RAY ARAULLO, KIM HOBBS & ROSALIE POCKETT

The practitioner research grant for 2018/19 has been awarded to an academic and practitioner partnership researching social work practice in cancer care.

The aims of the study are to identify the reasons for referring cancer patients and carers to social work and the types of interventions undertaken by social workers. By understanding more about what social workers do we can also understand more about those with whom we practice.

Social workers are often the first 'port of call' for patients with complex social circumstances made more complicated by a diagnosis of cancer. Those with poorer cancer outcomes are often from communities experiencing impoverished and inequitable access to appropriate services, particularly in rural and regional centres and in Indigenous communities.

Results from a national survey of the oncology social work workforce published by the research team in 2016 found an experienced social work workforce highly engaged in professional networks and professional practice supervision. However, although health services are key providers in cancer care, not all cancer services have access to social workers, with the majority of social workers practising in metropolitan centres.

Interestingly, in the survey social workers in both metropolitan and regional areas reported barriers to the provision of quality psychosocial care. Psycho-oncology is a relatively new discipline in the health field and by its very name tends to locate much interdisciplinary psychosocial oncology practice in the domain of individual functioning and distress. However, social work services are multifocused and may include psychosocial assessment, supportive counselling, survivorship care, distress screening, care coordination, referral to services and resources, bereavement care,

health education and community engagement.

This focus is not only on the individual and their families but on wider understandings of health and wellbeing. Drawing on critical perspectives, and viewing practice through a lens of health inequalities, social workers bring a social justice perspective to their work advocating for systemic change, health equity and wider understandings of the social determinants of health and wellbeing. A further objective of the study is to foreground the social aspects of the cancer experience reflecting the diversity of social circumstances and the lived experiences of those affected by cancer.

With wide appeal to social workers in health settings, clinical data-mining methodology has been used in the study. This method uses available information and supports practice-based research and practitioner participation. The study design has involved a retrospective review of 250 medical records at six health sites across three Australian states: NSW, Queensland and Victoria. The sites represent metropolitan, inpatient, day patient, regional and rural settings. Opportunistic sampling has been used and participating oncology social workers at each site have reviewed and coded their work according to specific criteria.

The Australian classification system for social work interventions has been used to gather classified data using an audit tool developed for the study. The analysis of the data will include descriptive, bivariate and multivariate analyses of aggregated data across the six sites including demographic data; general cancer information, social work contact types, referral data and interventions undertaken. Qualitative

analysis will be used to review additional notes made by coders when reviewing records.

Human Research Ethics Committee approvals were obtained from lead HRECs in each state in addition to site-specific governance approvals from each of the six participating sites.

The interventions study is the third part of a larger project describing oncology social work practice in Australia. The first part involved a national survey of oncology social work that resulted in findings about the social work oncology workforce mentioned earlier. Survey respondents were accessed through a number of professional groups including the AASW and the study had AASW Research Committee approval.

The second part of the project involved a systematic literature review of social work intervention research with adult cancer patients. The interventions study will contribute to the current sparse literature about the scope of Australian oncology social work practice.

Publications have resulted from the first two parts of the project and these are listed for those wishing to read more about the results so far:

Pockett, R., Dzidowska, M., & Hobbs, K. (2015). Social work intervention research with adult cancer patients: A literature review and reflection on knowledge-building for practice. *Social Work in Health Care*, 54(7), 582-614.

Pockett, R., Peate, M., Hobbs, K., Dzidowska, M., Bell, M., Baylock, B., & Epstein, I. (2016). The characteristics of oncology social work in Australia: Implications for workforce planning in integrated cancer care. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 12(4), 444-452.

Acknowledgement

The researchers on this project are very appreciative of the funding received from the AASW through this research grant to support the third part of the social work in oncology project.



About the authors

Ray Araullo has a Master of Family and Couple Therapy degree and is the Deputy Head of Social Work at Royal North Shore Hospital. He has extensive clinical social work experience, primarily in haematology and bone marrow transplantation and has held positions in community development and team leadership in oncology social work.

Ray's interests include raising the profile and highlighting the significance of social work interventions in the field of psychosocial oncology.

Kim Hobbs has a MSW in research and has had a long career in oncology social work. She works at Westmead Hospital in the Department of Gynaecological Cancer. Building upon a solid base of clinical care of patients and their caregivers, Kim advocates for improved psychosocial support services for all people with cancer. She believes that psychosocial care should be an integral component of comprehensive cancer care throughout the treatment trajectory.

Dr Rosalie Pockett is an Honorary Senior Lecturer in the Sydney School of Education and Social Work, at the University of Sydney. She has a career background in hospital and health social work practice, leadership and management. Her areas of research include: health inequalities and social justice perspectives; practice-based research; and critical reflection in education and practice.

Research partnerships

Mutual benefits and mutual responsibility

CHRISTINE BIGBY

This article draws on principles for research partnerships that Australian Research Council (ARC) research team member Professor Chris Bigby has developed through the successes and struggles of her research program.

Participants in our ARC study agree that mutual benefits arise when researchers and those who use research in practice, program development advocacy and policy collaborate from the 'get go' in the research process. Not all agree on who has the primary responsibility to establish research partnerships or how they can be sustained.

The NGO managers, practice leaders and others who 'had their say' in this study – the research end users (REUs) – view research, and promoting evidence into practice, as a mutual responsibility. One NGO manager suggested that: '...there needs to be more active engagement and ownership by NGOs of research.' Staff in smaller-to-medium-sized organisations said that they know little about what research is being undertaken in their field in Australia. Comments such as: 'academics have a responsibility to engage with NGOs more' and 'to translate knowledge into practice' were raised by some of these participants.

All REUs expressed strong interest in building more collaborative projects with researchers. All said they have at least one significant relationship and/or project with a researcher or research team at a University.

How are research partnerships established?

The strategies and mechanisms used by NGOs and academic researchers in this study to build their research partnerships include:

Formal research agreements. Some REUs had contracts and partnerships with universities. One peak body REU stated that:

For the past 4-5 years we have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Australia's leading universities. This enables information exchange with academics, and they bring work to our attention.

Commissioned research. Only the larger NGOs had capacity to target specific researchers in their field to commission research.

Respond to approaches by researchers. The small-medium organisations were most often approached by researchers to participate in major projects as partners in ARC linkage or related grants. The NGO contribution was usually in-kind staff support and access to consumers of their services. Some NGOs contribute modest funding.

Participation in research networks. REUs from peak bodies and larger organisations facilitated networks to bring researchers and practitioners together to exchange research information.



About the author

Professor Christine Bigby is Director of the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University and Professor of Social Work. For some time she has investigated the effectiveness of social programs and policies that aim to support the social inclusion of adults and older people with intellectual disabilities. She has published widely and has been a Chief Investigator on 11 Australian Research Council competitive grants with continuous ARC funding since 2004.



Tips for effective research partnerships

At a research forum hosted during the course of this study, Professor Bigby presented some useful tips on how academics and REUs can build mutually beneficial and enduring research partnerships. In leading a successful research program aimed at improving the wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities that has spanned 19 years Chris is well-positioned to know what works. Her partnership tips are summarised as:

Build reputation. For researchers it is important to build their reputation as credible 'go to' researchers. Reputation can be enhanced by pursuing one program of research, over an extended period of time, in an area of high interest to REUs.

Build relationships. Good, enduring relationships occur when all parties are actively engaged from the start in setting research questions and design through to translation of findings into practice. This builds trust among partners and commitment to the research.

Find reciprocity and mutual benefit. All parties will be more engaged and committed to all stages of the research where there is reciprocity and mutual benefit to consumers of services, researchers and REUs. It is important to remember that partners will have different priorities. For academics, journal publications are an imperative, while for NGOs it is the translation of research into more accessible formats.

Plan for differences in expectations and reality. Each party to the research

may well have different priorities and expectations and different 'lenses' through which the research is viewed. It is important to be upfront with all parties and to accept that the path of research is not linear - adjusting plans along the way will be the norm, not the exception.

Persist with ideas. Persist through a process of thinking, doing, trying and doing things again - a process in which all parties to the research critically reflect, develop ideas and adapt.

It takes time and can be about timing. Building strong partnerships takes time. Researchers also need to be astute to current policy and funding priorities of government. Research findings that coincide with issues of high public or government interest are more likely to have greater impact in shaping policy.

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How research can improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care

Two case studies

CLARE TILBURY & ELIZABETH FERNANDEZ

Improving life outcomes for children in out-of-home care and after care is front of mind for researchers Clare Tilbury of Griffith University and Elizabeth Fernandez of the University of New South Wales.



About the authors

Professor Clare Tilbury is the Leneen Forde Chair of Child and Family Research, School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith University.

Elizabeth Fernandez is Professor of Social Work in the School of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales.

In Queensland-based research on the school-to-work transition, Clare set out to investigate how child protection authorities prepared young people for this major life change and how it could be improved. Elizabeth's research program has spanned the out-of-home care field, from reunification to long-term outcomes for adult survivors of institutional abuse.

There is increasing attention in the child protection field to improving life outcomes for children and young people, beyond their immediate protection from abuse or neglect. As part of her broader work of performance measurement in child protection, Clare has explored transitions from care and how to prepare young people in care better for entering the workforce.

Clare's approach to research is to engage from the start with the main stakeholder organisations – statutory child safety agencies, non-government service providers, and peak bodies – to determine the issues and research questions, and to harness a commitment to implementation of findings.

The research program exposed the lack of career planning for young people in care. It provided impetus and evidence to inform policy changes in Queensland in three directions:

1. encouraging aspiration – exposing young people to information, experiences, and role models from a range of careers to see the opportunities available to them
2. raising expectations – helping young people to identify their skills and

interests and match these to future careers so that they can develop realistic expectations

3. increasing self-efficacy – helping young people to succeed at school and develop the confidence to pursue their career goals.

The ongoing impact of the research program on policy and practice has been significant. The research findings led to:

- More focus on career development and work readiness in Queensland school-to-work transition policies. <https://www.qld.gov.au/youth/family-social-support/planning-transition-independence>
- Evidence to inform an intervention program, Ignite Aspirations, in one Queensland region to (1) equip foster and kinship carers to provide career planning support to young people; (2) provide tailored career advice to young people in care; (3) raise awareness of the importance of this issue to child protection practitioners; and (4) establish a social enterprise to give young people in care work experience.
- New practice tools in the form of a career booklet and website for young people in care. These are promoted nationally by CREATE Foundation (advocacy by and for young people in care). Based on the booklet and website, the Child Safety Department developed a digital app (Sortli) to promote access to information and resources for young people.



Sortli is a free mobile app created for young people by young people. It includes step-by-step guides for help:

- navigating life challenges
- finding somewhere to live
- finding a job
- understanding legal rights
- setting and tracking goals
- planning budgets
- finding details for important services

<http://createyourfuture.org.au/about-me/leaving-care/sortli/>

Elizabeth has led research in two related areas. One area has explored children's attachment to new families; measured outcomes of foster care over the long-term in partnership with Barnados Australia; and examined ways to improve stability in care and enhance the success of reunification for children returning to families.

The second area ran concurrently with the Australian Government's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. It explored the life experiences of care leavers (now adults) – Forgotten Australians, former British Child Migrants and Members of the Stolen Generations – who lived in institutions and other forms of care as children. Elizabeth became nationally recognised as a 'go-to expert' through the substantial evidence-base and knowledge she acquired on this issue.

The first program of research has generated a body of evidence over the long-term of the experiences and outcomes of children in out-of-home care. This has informed new decision-making tools and specialist services to assist children on the edge

The learnings from this research strengthen the growing evidence of historical yet enduring harm and trauma that so many young people and children experienced in institutional care

of care to be looked after by their families and ensure optimal outcomes for children who are in need of care. The Barnados Looking After Children and SCARF case management systems that were developed in collaboration with this research program have been introduced in other child welfare agencies across Australia.

Findings from Elizabeth's reunification research have identified predictors of children's restoration to birth families and factors associated with reunification pathways to guide practitioners' decision making.

The second program of research has provided a compelling body of evidence to expose historical widespread harm and trauma endured by children in institutional care and other types of care in the 20th century. The learnings from this research strengthen the growing evidence of historical yet enduring harm and trauma that so many young people and children experienced in institutional care. This evidence has been instrumental in securing the government commitment to long-term financial and emotional support for adult survivors of this abuse.

Elizabeth said that early in her research career she concentrated on building knowledge to enable policymakers to make informed decisions. For later projects, she thought more deliberately and strategically about where she published, and what she did, to disseminate findings and achieve impact.

The experience of Clare and Elizabeth shows that it can be difficult to juggle

research, service to the community, engaging with the field, teaching, management and other roles we all carry. Their achievements provide two great examples of how to promote research use in social work practice – it can have a remarkable impact on change.

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Engagement and impact

A new agenda for Australian research

MIKE FISHER & MARK HUGHES

Mark Hughes and Mike Fisher look at the new engagement and impact agenda and what it means for social work.

In April this year, the Australian Government released the results of the nation's first assessment of the engagement and impact of academic research (EI 2018). Although it didn't make a big splash in the media, it was keenly awaited by universities, which, as ever, were interested in where they were positioned in relation to their competitors.

For the purposes of the 2018 Engagement and Impact Assessment Exercise (EI 2018):

- **Research Engagement** was defined as the interaction between researchers and research end-users outside of academia for the mutually beneficial transfer of knowledge, technologies, methods or resources.
- **Research Impact** was defined as the contribution that research makes to the economy, society, environment or culture, beyond the contribution to economic research.

This recent focus on engagement and impact of academic research came about in 2015 as part of the Turnbull Government's National Innovation and Science Agenda. But it has a longer history – beginning with the Howard Government's Research Quality Framework in 2004, getting picked up and expanded in the UK's Research Excellence Framework in 2008, and then being transferred back to Australia in a impact case study pilot in 2012 run by the Group of Eight and

the Australian Technology Network universities.

Despite the stop-start nature of the assessment of research impact in Australia, there has been a consistent drive to strengthen the industry relevance and connections of university research. For us, this drive reflects in large measure the loss of trust governments and politicians have in academics to produce 'useful' research and the increased auditing of publicly funded activities by government.

In the UK, research assessment has been incredibly costly for universities – estimated to be around £232m (94% of the £246m total cost of the Research Excellence Framework) and a new industry of impact case study writers and consultants has emerged.

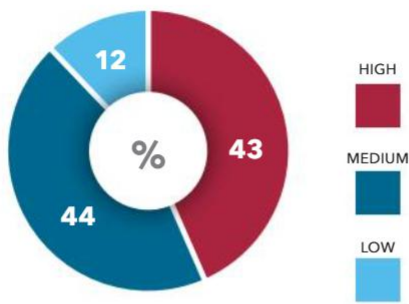
In Australia, EI 2018 involved universities submitting one detailed case study of research impact for each of their high-performing research fields, providing statements about the nature of engagement activities and being assessed according to some quantitative indicators of engagement (e.g. research commercialisation income). Ratings were provided on a 3-point scale (Low, Medium, High) for the impact itself, the university's approach to impact, and engagement. For impact, 637 case studies were assessed – 43 per cent were rated as high, 44 per cent medium, and 12 per cent low. For approach to impact, 25 per cent of case studies were rated high, 51 per cent medium, and 24 per cent low. There were 626 assessments of engagement of which 34 per cent were rated high, 51 per cent medium and 15 per cent low.



About the authors

Professor Mike Fisher, Professor of Evidence-Based Social Work, Director of the Institute of Applied Social Research (IASR), University of Bedfordshire, UK.

Professor Mark Hughes is a social worker and has worked in health, aged care and mental health settings in both Australia and the UK. He is currently Dean and Head of School, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southern Cross University.



IMPACT

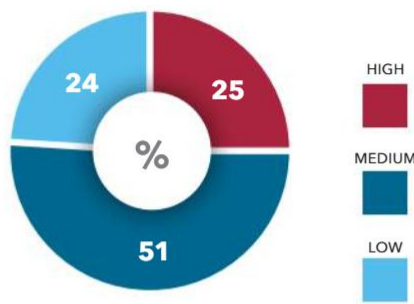
The government has only released the impact case studies that were rated as high. Disappointingly, none of these specifically documented social work research. Although there are many very relevant case studies in the '16 – Studies in Human Society' research field. These can be accessed here: <https://dataportal.arc.gov.au/EI/Web/Impact/ImpactStudies>

Despite this, it is expected that the engagement and impact agenda will provide an opportunity for social work researchers to showcase the impact of their research activities and highlight the extensive collaborations with community, industry and government organisations that lead to successful research programs.

The case studies that we developed through the Advancing Social Work Research project illustrate the high-level impact and engagement activities Australian social work researchers are pursuing. When we spoke to researchers it was clear that most had planned for impact at the beginning and had chosen their research focus because they wanted to make a difference.

Nonetheless, there are some challenges for social work and other disciplines in this new terrain. A key question relates to how impact is produced – many important innovations have involved a cast of hundreds and decades in producing the evidence needed to transform a field of practice.

In our analysis of the social work research case studies, researchers often highlighted that they were one of many who contributed to the



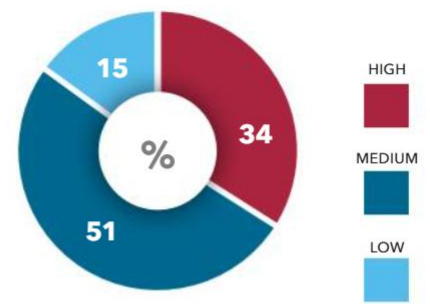
APPROACH TO IMPACT

changes and that there was not always a direct line between their research findings and the specific changes that occurred. In the field of cardiovascular research it takes an average of 17 years for research evidence to reach clinical practice. In our analysis of the 12 case studies, we found that the first impact was identified, on average, 6.92 years after the research commenced and was up to 17 years in one case.

So time will tell if the new engagement and impact agenda will drive real reform and produce better outcomes from academic research. Or if it will simply result in more 'gaming' of the system by universities, more production of measurable outputs rather than lasting outcomes, and cost more than it is worth.

No doubt a key factor will be if engagement and impact assessment becomes tied to funding to universities – that would lead to a dramatic shifting in focus. What we can be sure of is social work researchers will continue to focus on better understanding and addressing social issues in a way that transforms policy, organisational operations, service delivery, and the welfare of individuals and communities.

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ENGAGEMENT

The case studies that we developed through the Advancing Social Work Research project illustrate the high-level impact and engagement activities Australian social work researchers are pursuing

Research, advocacy and impact in ageing and aged care

BRIONY DOW, BETTY HARALAMBOUS & MARK HUGHES



About the authors

Associate Professor Briony Dow is Director of the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) and Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Melbourne. At NARI Briony oversees a range of both social and clinical gerontology research programs, including her own research into elder abuse and carer mental health.

Betty Haralambous is the stream leader for Cultural Diversity at NARI. Her research focus is to improve service knowledge and access among older people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds with dementia.

Professor Mark Hughes is a social worker and has worked in health, aged care and mental health settings in both Australia and the UK. He is currently Dean and Head of School, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Southern Cross University.

With the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety investigating the challenges and opportunities for developing accessible and high-quality aged care services, attention should now focus on how social workers and social work researchers can drive innovation and reform.

Briony Dow and Betty Haralambous have developed a Cultural Exchange Model to enhance early detection and treatment of dementia, anxiety and depression for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people. Similarly, Mark Hughes is on a mission to improve the social, cultural and material conditions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) older people.

Impact through partnerships and advocacy

The research led by Briony and Betty through the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) exemplifies the best of multidisciplinary research, practice, partnerships and action. People of diverse cultural backgrounds often present late for diagnosis of dementia, depression and anxiety resulting in unmet needs for older people and their families.

Previous cognitive and mental health assessment processes and tools, including the use of interpreters, were often deficient. The Cultural Exchange Model of research fosters good practice in the inclusion of people from CALD backgrounds. The new culturally responsive assessment tools and processes developed by NARI using this model have been made widely accessible to practitioners through face-to-face training and on-line.

Armed with research evidence, the NARI team use the political process and advocacy to pursue positive policy reform and program change. In 2016, for example, NARI and the Federation of Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA) hosted a successful roundtable

at Parliament House, Canberra to inform organisations and Members of Parliament about the need to fund and conduct more health research in CALD communities.

The Federal Departments of Health and Social Services and Victorian-based government health agencies have contributed actively to the research and have applied the findings to improve policy service delivery, particularly in aged care and cognitive assessment processes.

The results of their persistent efforts – better-informed practitioners and policy makers and improved treatment of mental health issues for people who face many barriers in accessing good health care.



About the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI)

NARI conducts research into the major health issues that affect older people, and uses this research to shape health promotion, service provision and policy development relating to older people, recognising that Australia's older population is very diverse. It has been at the forefront of gerontological research for more than four decades and has become one of Australia's premier research institutes in this field. Their vision is a world where older people are respected, healthy and included.

Impact through persistence and evidence

The 17-year program of research led by Mark Hughes aimed from the start to influence service delivery and professional practice to better recognise the rights and needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) older people.

LGBTI issues were once the primary concern of activists and researchers – they are now centrestage. Mark and his research partners have exposed the inadequacies of aged-care services and policies in dealing with LGBTI people. Mark has used the public policy and political processes to good effect to translate his research findings into new policy and practice.

This is evidenced by the recognition given to LGBTI ageing in the Productivity Commission Report on Caring for Older Australians (2011), the subsequent government response, the development of the National LGBTI Ageing and Aged Care Strategy, the national roll-out of LGBTI sensitivity training to aged care providers, the inclusion of LGBTI seniors as a special needs group under the Aged Care Act, the funding of targeted services (e.g. community visitors programs, home-care packages) for LGBTI older people, and the recent development of a new Action Plan for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse and intersex elders.

Mark and his research partners haven't attracted big buckets of funding, but they have attracted attention. The development of the Aged Care Strategy (National Strategy), and reform of the Sex Discrimination Act set new standards for service providers in the aged care and health fields to provide: inclusive, LGBTI-friendly services, and to restrict use of discriminatory practices.

Among other impacts, Mark's research findings on LGBTI older people's difficulties accessing end-of-life care support and advance care planning were cited in the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists position statement 'Recognising and Addressing the Mental Health Needs of the LGBTI Population' (2016). As a gay man, Mark looks forward to a better experience of ageing than previous generations of LGBTI people.

'Good research has good engagement'

The views of those who use social work research

CANDICE BUTLER & KAREN STRUTHERS

Candice Butler was one of the research participants, and Karen Struthers, a Research Fellow, on the Australian Research Council (ARC) project on advancing social work research.

Research that engages stakeholders from the start, that is localised and translated readily in practice is what users of social work research want more of. There is also a call for more culturally responsive and community-controlled research to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The call for culturally responsive and community-controlled research

A determination to overcome the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection and youth justice systems with evidence-based reforms is one factor that prompted Candice Butler to contribute to this ARC research. Here's what Candice had to say.



I chose to participate in in this ARC project via interview and attendance at the November 2018 forum because I didn't want to miss an opportunity to talk about how useful knowledge circles and community-controlled research is to our communities.

At QATSICPP (Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak) we apply evidence-based research, practice experience and wisdom. We learn from each other and we use more than conventional research. For example, we participate in knowledge circles with member organisations. Our staff use formal and informal types of research to implement new policies or practice directives.

CONTINUED



ChildProtectionPeak

About QATSICPP

The principal purpose of QATSICPP, above all, is to promote and advocate the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families through effective partnerships and strategic collaborations. We provide leadership in advocacy and the development of policies, strategies and programs to resource, support and strengthen the capacity and capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child protection agencies in the interests of our children, families and communities.

<https://www.qatsicpp.com.au/>

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The research on the Child Placement Principle and kinship care that Clare Tilbury has done with our member organisations has been really influential in reforming the way services work. In giving voice to what community leaders and families have been saying, this kind of evidence-based research has helped SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care) and QATSICPP to adopt a new resource, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation*.

The Child Placement Principle aims to keep children connected to their families, communities, cultures and country, and to ensure the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in decisions about their children's care and protection. The Principle centres on five elements: prevention, partnership, participation, placement and connection. We are also working towards developing a Centre for Excellence to strengthen research and practice.

To have impact, research needs to be transformed into practice or into legislation and policy. It needs to drive transformational change where people feel they are heard. The developments with the Child Placement Principle and its influence on child protection practice is a good example of researchers, community voices, and leadership working well together.

A colleague and I went to an international social work conference recently – we saw what community-controlled research was around. We need to own and control our research. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing are important. Good research has good engagement. It involves all relevant people – the voices of children, community member voices, and the government decision-makers.

On the lips of everybody at the moment is the need to build our Indigenous evidence-base and the need to back up what we are doing and achieving with research. Practice can be dismissed if we do not have more research. Our ways of knowing, being and doing need to be valued more, and backed by relevant research.

I would love to see more social work research done in my community. We need to have more confidence in using research evidence and in writing for research purposes. We need more research support from management. Time is limited and caseloads are high, but research is important.

Five stand-out messages from research end users

To date, 40 research end users already have been interviewed on the good and not-so-good aspects of social work research in Australia. The research end users include practitioners, policy makers and consumer advocates and senior executive staff in non-government organisations and government agencies. The five stand-out messages are:

- 1 **The high priority on evidence-informed practice:** The research end users want more investment in research and in strategies to make research accessible and to improve understanding of issues and how to better respond to community needs. One participant summed up a common view in suggesting: 'We need to remove the disconnect between researchers, academics and organisations.'
- 2 **Little recognition of a distinct social work field or body of social work research:** There was keen interest in elevating research skills and impact in the discipline of social work, with many users of research finding that multidisciplinary research to which social workers contribute their social justice mission and structural analysis of issues and interventions is very useful.
- 3 **Barriers limit access to, and application of, research:** A lack of time to conduct or keep up to date with research, lack of research investment and staff skilled in research, and the priority to client service over research, were commonly raised barriers. This was described in comments, from service managers as: 'We have over 1000 staff, but only one research staff member' and '...it takes a long time to translate research into practice and organisations need staff to do this.'
- 4 **The importance of consumer participation:** Users of research spoke in support of consumers identifying and prioritising research questions, and in being active throughout the research process.
- 5 **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have greater control over research:** The call from Candice Butler was backed up by other participants, including a senior manager in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service who stated:
We have tried to take hold of data because current data that are collected speak to one narrative, and it is negative about us [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples]. We have self-corrected that because we want to use the data to tell our story... So we can use data to highlight another reality.

About the authors

Candice Butler is the Senior Practice Leader at Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP). Candice has strong family links in Yarrabah, northern Queensland to the Kuku Yalanji and Wulgurukaba tribes. She has Bachelor of Social Work and Post-graduate Diploma in Primary Education.

Dr Karen Struthers, Research Fellow, School of Human Services and Social Work, Griffith University. Karen's career has spanned non-government, academic and government sectors, including 13 years as a Member of Parliament and Minister for Community Services, Housing and Women in Queensland.



YOUR DISTINCTION



FIND OUT MORE

What is Your Distinction? The AASW's credentialing program

AASW's Your Distinction program continues to distinguish specialist and advanced social work practice in a range of areas. Credentials which are available are the [Accredited Clinical Social Worker](#), [Accredited Family Violence Social Worker](#) and the [Accredited Mental Health Social Worker](#).

Credentials assure individuals and their families, the Australian community, employers and funding bodies that accredited social workers have acquired a specialist level of expertise in their field of practice. The AASW has had an accreditation program since 2005, and the expansion of the program has been led by both industry drivers and demand from members.

Over the coming months, new credentials will be launched. [You can register your interest on our website](#). We have received interest from members suggesting the credentials be expanded to include other areas of practice.

These credentials offer you an opportunity to position yourself as a social worker with a reputation of expertise and distinction, assuring the people you work with that you meet the highest standards of knowledge, safety and quality of service in social work.

For eligibility requirements and to apply, visit the [AASW website](#).

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Some of the many benefits from becoming accredited include

- Credentials are a symbol of quality and established competency
- Credentials are a sector indicator of achieved experience and capability
- Your Distinction – a credential establishes that you have achieved recognition in your field of practice
- Commitment to ongoing excellence – the credential demonstrates the currency of your skills and knowledge by setting a high standard of continuous professional development that validates your commitment to excellence
- A formalised community of practice and network of peers – through sharing of knowledge and experiences and delivering on best practice.

The opportunities of research placements

INES ZUCHOWSKI



About the author

Dr Ines Zuchowski is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work at James Cook University. Her research interests include violence prevention, social work education, field education and research collaborations. Previously, Ines has worked as a social worker in northern Queensland focusing on gendered violence, community education and training, project and service management.

Ines Zuchowski talks about the opportunities for developing research placements in social work. Research placements can develop practitioners' confidence and competence in research and can advance research and research partnerships that are relevant to the placement practice setting and the organisation.

Field education is an essential building block in students' journey to professional social work practice. Here future practitioners learn what it means to be a social worker in an organisational context, assisting them to link what they have learnt in theory to practice.

There are many fields of practice that social workers can be employed in, whether in social work specific roles or more general positions; these include roles that involve research and evaluation. Moreover, research is critical to all social work practice. Research in its broadest sense can be any activity that creates new knowledge or new insights into existing knowledge.

Practitioners use research skills in practice. However, they might not identify them as research skills, but rather as general practice skills. Additionally, while practitioners might be interested in research they are generally time-poor and sometimes

unsure where to start. More systematic approaches to research and using available and new information to improve practice can make a difference to social work practice and its development.

For these reasons it is important to create opportunities for 'becoming practitioners' and experienced practitioners to develop and use research skills. Being engaged in research is conducive to using research throughout practice. Thus, research placements would be a good preparation for practice.

If research is an integral part of field education, it becomes part of the expected practice. Moreover, student research placements can address the needs of the community and organisations. They may provide unique placement options at a time when it is difficult to find enough placements for students.

Research placements can be stand-alone, smaller, contained

Research activities that may be suitable for social work placements

- Surveys, comprising both quantitative and qualitative questions
- Policy analysis
- Literature reviews – such as scoping reviews and critical interpretive reviews
- Program or service evaluation – evaluating processes and outcomes
- Focus groups
- Qualitative interviews
- Community needs survey and analysis
- Appreciative inquiry research

projects, involving just one or two students on placement, or they could involve larger projects that run across a whole year or even multiple years. In this case, consecutive research placement students would be working on progressing the same project over time.

Here, the initial students might be involved in research planning, conceptualisation and exploration, and undertake literature reviews, draft methodology sections or ethics applications. Students in subsequent placements would build on this work and add through data collection, analysis, reporting and so on.

Research placements require an investment of time and resources for long-term outcomes in terms of placement availabilities, skills development, and increase of research and research use. It is important to consider how we present and support research placements.

Students and practitioners can be apprehensive about participating in research; both might need to be encouraged about the idea of research

placements. For organisations, that might mean starting with small inquiries that can have timely outcomes useful for the practice setting: a 'quick win'.

It might involve reframing 'research' as 'improving outcomes'. For students, it might mean using language and concepts that make research less abstract and gets them to identify the skills and knowledge they already have that will help them in the learning process. Language that both agencies and students might find more appealing in considering a research placement includes project work, quality improvement or assurance work, or program evaluation.

As with any research partnership, relationship building and maintenance is important. Social work educators would need to be interested, involved, supportive and resourced to do this work. Ideally research academics would be working in or with field education units. Social work programs will need to get lead practitioners and organisations on board and build relationships and exchange the

expertise that makes collaborative research viable.

Much can be gained from developing a systematic approach to establishing and supporting research placements so that they can be beneficial to students and practitioners in the long term.

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A national research strategy for social work

KAREN HEALY

'We need a national conversation among our key social work organisations on the structures and strategies needed to build research excellence so that our discipline may take its place nationally and internationally as a leading contributor to evidence-informed social work practice, social policy, and social progress.'

Professor Karen Healy, former AASW National President, 2017

Professor Karen Healy is one of Australia's leading social work researchers. This statement is a call to action – a challenge for our profession to elevate research quality and its impact on wellbeing and social change. Karen has stated in a number of forums that the research performance of social work does not match our growing presence in higher education institutions. There are also barriers to research output and quality that need to be overcome. One of these barriers is the focus on preparation for clinical practice in social

work education, with limited preparation for research practice.

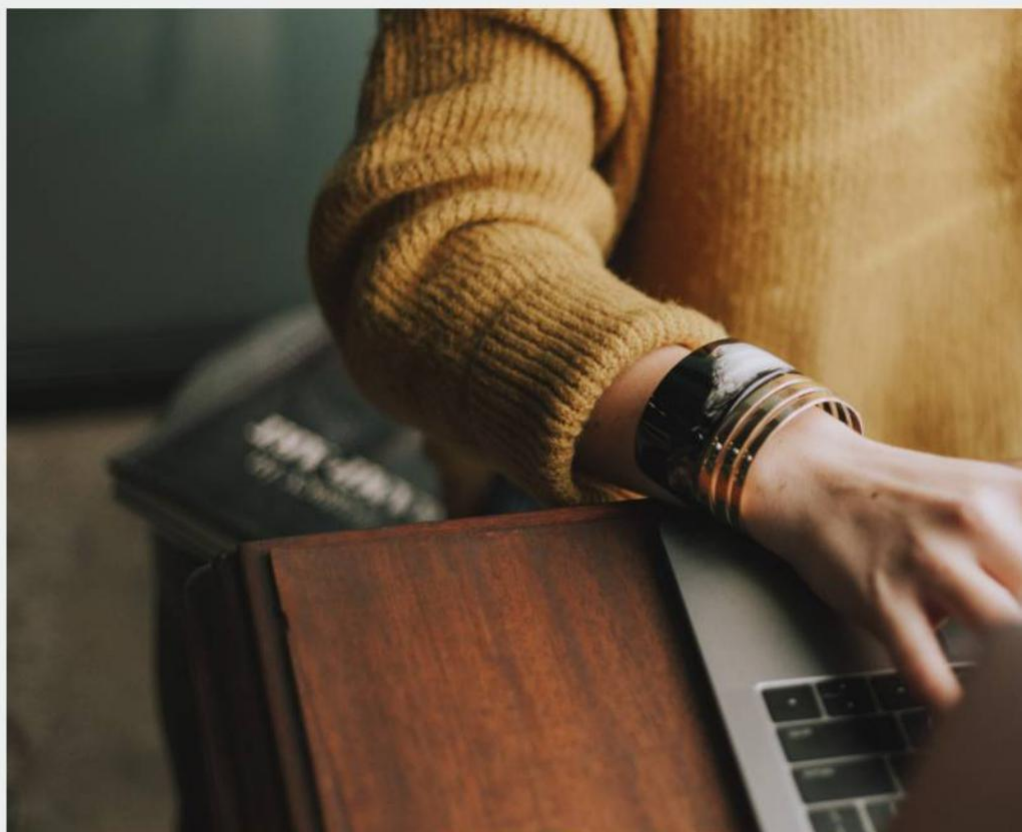
Karen has recognised a number of opportunities to strengthen social work research. These include:

- The funding of longitudinal evaluations, through innovative means, such as social bonds.
- The growing body of social work academics. With new social work programs around Australia a critical mass of research-active social workers is developing.



About the author

Karen Healy AM is Professor of Social Work in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, University of Queensland. Karen is the immediate past National President of the Australian Association of Social Workers. She is also a National Director for The Benevolent Society.



- The increasing research capacity of social work graduates. Changes to the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) introduced in 2013, is contributing to an intensification of research training in all honours and masters level degrees.
- The emerging interest in structures that will recognise and support excellence in Australian social work research.

Karen walks the talk on research. The research program that she and her colleagues have led on family participation in decision-making about child protection is an exemplar of how research can be effective in exposing issues of concern and in promoting practice and policy reform.



Family participation in decision-making about child protection

Developing meaningful family participation in decision-making is a longstanding principle of effective child protection work. Karen has been a strong advocate for the rights of parents and children in the statutory care systems. The research she has led has exposed deficiencies in the family group meeting (FGM) and Assessment of Intervention with Parents' Agreement (IPA) mechanisms for parents/carers with children in statutory care in Queensland.

The research has given impetus for new participatory models with parents/carers to be adopted and for new training programs and practice guidelines to be developed. Determined from the start to make sure their research impacted on practice, Karen and her colleagues (i) specifically incorporated a policy development phase into the research, and (ii) conducted many seminars for practitioners aimed at enhancing collaboration between statutory agencies and parents/carers.

The program of research attracted over \$1 million in funding. It was based around two major projects.

1. [Participatory Decision Making and Policy Production in Child Welfare \(2006-2009\)](#). This research involved interviews with parents and child protection officers and a critical analysis of family group meetings (FGM). The research findings revealed that there was an inherent conflict in the statutory authorities' dual responsibilities to convene and control FGM—limiting parents' capacity to participate meaningfully.
2. [A Study of Best Practice in Intervention with Parental Agreement: Creating Change with Families in Statutory Child Protection Services \(2012-2015\)](#). Conducted with industry partners, Department of Child Safety and Micah Projects, Queensland. Families asked to enter into IPAs will have already been subject to an investigation. The children would have been determined to be at risk of abuse and neglect. Rather than creating a collaborative working relationship many families remained reluctant participants in the process due to a fear of losing their children. The impacts of the research were: (i) to expose barriers to parental collaboration and (ii) to show how parenting agreements can be used in practice with vulnerable families to enhance child protection and family wellbeing.

In partnership with the Parenting Research Centre in 2016/2017, Karen also conducted a statewide evaluation of Intensive Family Support services – a project funded by the Queensland Government.

One of the outcomes of the ARC research project on advancing social work research is for our team to develop a research agenda for social work with input from researchers and research end users nationally. Let us know if you want to have your say.

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Research

Evidence to action

MICHELE ROBINSON & CATHY HUMPHREYS



About the authors

Michele Robinson is the Director, Evidence to Action at Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS). Michele's experience in building knowledge partnerships and developing strategies for the translation, application and exchange of research findings in the domestic, family and sexual violence sector builds on her previous roles as a senior executive in the university sector and the Queensland Government.

Professor Cathy Humphreys, Professor of Social Work and Co-Director of the Safer Families Centre of Research Excellence at University of Melbourne. Prof. Humphreys is a co-founder of MAEVe, the Research Alliance to End Violence Against Women and Children.

Michele Robinson Director, Evidence to Action, Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), describes the knowledge transfer model developed by ANROWS that is shaping policy and practice in the violence against women field across Australia. The ANROWS funded research by Professor Cathy Humphreys and her colleagues is featured to demonstrate this model in action.

For Canadian-based researcher, Benoit Gauthier, rather than 'evidence-based', it is more accurate to talk about 'evidence-informed policy-making' as there are many influences on policy and action – not all are derived from research evidence. The changing policy and service responses to violence against women in Australia is an interesting case of evidence and advocacy influencing policy, funding and action.

No doubt, the growing research evidence-base has been influential in convincing decision-makers of the need for action. The research continues to expose the harm and hardship to children and women in particular, the financial costs of domestic and family violence, and shows interventions that work.

The evidence is compelling, but there is no guarantee that evidence will result in positive change. As Gauthier argues, there is no impact without content but there is also no impact without influence. To achieve the unprecedented national commitment to policy and action to end violence against women, persistent advocacy and strategic partnerships have laid the ground work. The research evidence, both timely and credible, has strengthened and supported the calls for action.

To sustain positive change, building the research base and translating findings into practice is essential. To advance the evidence-base in Australia, ANROWS was established in 2013 as an initiative of Australia's National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

2010–2022. It seeks to produce, disseminate and assist in applying evidence to policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children.

ANROWS has developed a model that prioritises the integration of the research and knowledge translation process to support the dissemination of research findings and uptake of knowledge into practice.

The ANROWS knowledge transfer and exchange (KTE) principles are:

- work in partnership with researchers, policymakers, practitioners and women with lived experience
- engage knowledge users in every stage of the process
- develop resources as part of coherent program
- promote research that is accessible, relevant and useful
- monitor, audit, review research impact.

In practice, this means that ANROWS supports and/or funds specific knowledge transfer activities and embeds a requirement for these to be conducted in each research project it funds. Since 2013, ANROWS has produced 33 research projects, with 37 underway.

The use of action research methodologies and ANROWS's leadership role in assisting the translation and exchange of research findings has resulted in the take-up of evidence in practice throughout the research process. Further, including

policy-developers and practitioners in decisions on research grants and the review of draft reports assists the take-up of evidence produced by ANROWS.

More direct engagement of stakeholders in the dissemination and application of research findings is achieved through two key mechanisms: the ANROWS network of National Plan Senior Officials; and the national Practitioner Engagement Group. Each group meets with ANROWS quarterly to discuss the most recent research findings and the implications for policy and practice.

Knowledge utilisation strategy and activities include:

- Promoting partnerships and knowledge networks between researchers, policymakers and practitioners
- Co-convening events hosted by ANROWS and relevant state or territory ministers, services and researchers to consider policy and practice implications of ANROWS research
- Hosting quarterly teleconference meetings with a network of National Plan senior officials, representing all nine Australian jurisdictions
- Convening the ANROWS Practitioner Engagement Group comprising 30 members including representatives of national and state or territory peak bodies
- Policy and practice papers, fact sheets, infographics, guides, videos and other resources
- Submissions to law and policy reform inquiries
- Syntheses of research on particular themes, seminars and conferences.

The ANROWS dissemination activities include:

- Publication of ANROWS research papers and reports on the ANROWS website
- The ANROWS Library database promoting new national and international research
- The fortnightly publication 'ANROWS Notepad'
- E-alerts to subscribers when new publications are available on the website public events (workshops, seminars and lectures)
- 'In-conversation' recordings of interviews with international scholars available on the website
- Integrated knowledge transfer strategies.

ANROWS has held more than 28 major activities aimed at transferring knowledge to policy and practice around the country. The application of evidence increases as ANROWS moves more fully to the second phase in an ongoing cycle of evidence production and evidence take-up.

Evidence produced by ANROWS has been used by policy developers and practitioners in both government and community services, and others, across Australia. A recent example of evidence into action is the support ANROWS has provided to Professor Cathy Humphreys and her colleagues in their quest to develop new skills and foster new practice frameworks and models of interagency work in child protection and domestic and family violence – including work with fathers whose violence impacts on their children. Cathy describes herself as a research activist.

CASE STUDY INTERVIEW FOR THE ARC PROJECT WITH SELF-PROFESSED RESEARCH ACTIVIST - PROFESSOR CATHY HUMPHREYS

The research I do with my colleagues is applied and activist – we plan impact from the start. I always ask myself: What do we need to do to make a difference in this space? I do a lot of action research. My colleagues and I are not going to hold everything still while we work out new approaches and service models. We also secure long-term commitment to research and its implementation with numerous government and non-government agencies.

Our goal is to make sure children, women and families live safer and better lives. We make a big effort to inform policy and advocate for change by feeding our research findings into major government inquiries and public events. We encourage the adoption of new practices by formulating research findings into practice frameworks and by facilitating information exchange and training sessions for government and non-government stakeholders.

The recent research funding our research teams have received from ANROWS has enabled us to conduct research and actively engage with practitioners and policymakers in two areas of domestic and family violence (DFV) to translate our findings into practice. The two projects are: (i) the **PATRICIA Project** which enabled us to develop and promote a collaborative framework to better integrate responses to child protection and domestic violence; and (ii) the **Invisible Practices** research project and practice guide on how child and family services' practitioners can better work with fathers who use violence against their families.

The desire of children for reparation – for fathers to make amends – and take responsibility is a major theme arising from the **Invisible Practices** research – it is encouraging to know that these expressed needs of children about their fathers are increasingly being incorporated into DFV practice and therapeutic work with children.

To promote the findings of the **PATRICIA Project**, ANROWS held forums in NT, WA, Qld, SA and NSW. These forums were well attended by government ministers, senior public servants and practitioners, prompting agencies to rethink how they record their notes, make assessments and undertake integrated child protection and DFV practice. To facilitate uptake of the **Invisible Practices** guidelines for practitioners ANROWS hosted a forum at Parliament House, NSW in November 2018.

In keeping with the applied nature of my work, I have also developed a deliberate publication strategy to link my research to the practice and policy framework in which the research is situated.

This is a rolling program of research, with a solid implementation agenda – that to me is research activism.

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Relationships in research

A key to 'buy in' and impact

MICHELE FOSTER & CHRISTINE BIGBY



About the authors

Michele Foster is Professor of Disability and Rehabilitation Research, Research Director, The Hopkins Centre, Menzies Health Institute Queensland, Griffith University. With her colleagues, Michele has collaborated more than 20 related research projects in the rehabilitation and service system field valued in excess of \$9 million.

Professor Christine Bigby is Director of the Living with Disability Research Centre at La Trobe University and Professor of Social Work. For some time she has investigated the effectiveness of social programs and policies that aim to support the social inclusion of adults and older people with intellectual disabilities. She has published widely and has been a Chief Investigator on 11 Australian Research Council competitive grants with continuous ARC funding since 2004.

Michele Foster and Chris Bigby put their social work skills and frameworks into action every day as researchers to advance the interests of people with disability and chronic injury.

Michele acknowledges that to achieve 'buy-in' and impact of research findings, relationships are essential. For Chris, collaboration and relationships of trust with disability service providers, advocacy groups, and people with disabilities and their families has been the foundation of all her research.

Michele states that her strength as a social work researcher is within a multidisciplinary team approach and the networks she has built within health, community and academic settings. For Michele, these relationships are essential to the research: 'I always have an impact strategy – all through the program of work.' The research team is embedded in health and academic settings, which facilitates continuous application and impact of the research findings.

She commonly gets people together to translate the research evidence into practice through: (i) policy roundtables and workshops – such as sessions with industry partners and senior departmental officials to ensure that 'policy people are on board from the word go'; and (ii) policy briefs and key message briefs for government and industry.

Michele is a fan of the 25/3/1 research reporting model to make findings accessible and useful to all audiences – that is, providing public information on research findings via a 25-page detailed report, a three-page summary, and a one-page brief.

The research program: Improved access to services and rehabilitation outcomes – Michele Foster

Providing effective and accessible services for people with lifelong disabling conditions, resulting from spinal cord injury and brain injury, in hospital and community settings, continues to be a major challenge. Clinical research is generally favoured and funded in health settings, making it difficult to attract funding for psychosocial research on rehabilitation and related areas.

With a focus on the areas of brain injury and spinal cord injury, this research has three streams:

1. Applied policy and systems research: work on how policy translates into local delivery contexts with emphasis on the financing, governance and administration of policy welfare programs and front-line policy work, and implementation analysis.
2. Rehabilitation and lifetime care for people with complex needs: focuses on the models of financing and management of lifetime care for people with acquired disability through neuro-trauma and progressive conditions.
3. Patient and family experiences living with complex/chronic health conditions and disability: work on the lived experiences of people, self-management and burden of treatment relative to issues such as disability and rehabilitation, complex health problems and palliative care.

The cumulative impact of the research program is the improved understanding of the patterns of service utilisation for people with acquired brain or spinal cord injury (and related chronic conditions) in the community, their recovery outcomes, and barriers to recovery and support. Michele and her colleagues have identified 'risk clusters' – patients at risk of hardship, poor health outcomes and limited support – and how the service system can better respond to the expressed needs and experiences of these people.

Health and community service agencies have used the research findings to adopt practices that improve the rehabilitation outcomes in hospital and community-based living for people with acquired brain or spinal cord injury, and related chronic conditions.

Michele has a track record of research outcomes that is inspiring to budding social work researchers.

Chris Bigby is also a great role model. The program of research led by Chris over many years has produced evidence of the poor and variable quality-of-life outcomes and staff

practice in Australian group homes – particularly for people with more severe intellectual disabilities.

A hallmark of this research is strong and enduring relationships. Close collaboration with end users at all stages, including people with intellectual disabilities and their family members is a feature of Chris's research approach.

Through the research, ethnographic data have been collected in small group homes using participant observation methods. This required researchers to work on shift alongside staff, use non-participant observation methods requiring unobtrusive structured observations of staff practice and their interactions with residents, interviews with practice leaders, and surveys completed by front-line staff.

In all projects, routine meetings have enabled partners to remain engaged in the research and to share how each organisation has applied the research to their own context. Organisations such as Greystanes Disability Services and Golden City Support Services have shared revised position descriptions, proposed revised structures for

practice leadership and procedures for recruitment.

The research team developed a free online resource Every Moment has Potential as an introduction to Active Support and Practice Leadership. The resource is used extensively by disability and training organisations in Australia and overseas. For example, it is used in TAFE Certificate III courses, and is embedded in learning systems of large providers such as Active in Australia, and Mosaic in the US, which supports more than 3500 people with intellectual disabilities across 10 states. Some organisations such as Unisson and 'House with No Steps' require its completion as part of staff induction.

Chris's work has also influenced the direction of quality assurance of group homes in Victoria. The research team has also made an impact through advocacy for policy change making submissions to key inquiries into disability services.

As a respected expert in her field, Chris continues to build trusted relationships that both advance her important research agenda and ultimately aim to improve the wellbeing of people with intellectual disabilities.

THE RESEARCH PROGRAM:

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF GROUP HOME SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

- CHRIS BIGBY

The rights-focused policy shifts in the early 1980s prioritised social inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. As institutions closed and community services developed, shared supported accommodation (group homes) accounted for the bulk of disability funding, and an estimated 17,000 people with intellectual disability now live in group homes. Despite this shift to community living and greater community presence, the evidence suggests that people with intellectual disabilities continue to be socially excluded, have low levels of engagement, participation in communities and often live in a distinct social space comprised of family, paid staff and other people with intellectual disabilities.

The program of research led by Chris Bigby began with collection of ethnographic data on staff culture and practices and progressed to larger-scale studies of the quality of support using structured observation methods, interviews with practice leaders, and surveys completed by front-line staff.

Although many organisations had adopted the internationally recognised best practice known as 'Active Support' they found it difficult to embed this in practice. Chris's research identified the type of culture associated with better group homes and key factors necessary to embedding Active Support, such as Practice Leadership. The non-government organisations that were part of these studies used the findings to change management structures of group homes, giving more priority to Practice Leadership. The research team designed open-access materials to make training and research findings more accessible across the disability sector. These have been used extensively with more than 135,500 page views in 2018.

The impact of social work research on participants

VICKI COWLING

A wish to contribute is a factor prompting participation in research, but how often do we think about the impact of this involvement on the participants.

Generally, the anticipated and desired impacts of social work research are to bring about changes in services, policies, legislation, and attitudes and values. This article reflects on the possible and actual impacts of qualitative social work research on participants in my PhD study, which examined the access to and nature of support experienced by children and families living with a family member with mental illness.

Twelve adults comprised the key participants in the study described here: nine mothers, two grandmothers and a foster mother. A partner of one mother also participated, and two young people who were children of another mother. Nine adults had a mental illness, with six also caring for a child with mental illness in their family.

The families were clients of a family support agency, and they became involved in the study following approaches made to them by their family worker, on my behalf. The adult family members participated in two interviews.

As the study anticipated interviewing children, people with a mental illness, and people of Aboriginal background justification for their involvement was required in the research ethics application, as well as explanations of how their rights and wellbeing would be safeguarded.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child advocates for the participation of children and young people where they are capable of forming their own views. Two young people participated as they wanted to, and their parent gave permission.

The justification for involvement of people with a mental illness was the anticipation that they would be parents caring for children and would be sufficiently well to provide that care, and to actively participate in giving their informed consent for themselves, and their children if relevant, to participate. The Aboriginal mental health workers were consulted during the preparation of the ethics application, and as the study progressed.

The process of participation began with the family workers being given information about the study, and then telling parents about the study, and giving them information I had prepared. The family workers used their judgement about inclusion or exclusion, based on the current situation for each family.

The parent then decided whether or not to participate, and if they did so their family worker advised me and passed on the phone number. Declining to participate did not affect family access to services. I phoned the parent to arrange the first meeting, with all families choosing to meet in their homes, a familiar and secure setting.

At the first meeting the steps involved were explained. There were two interviews about six months apart, including completion of questionnaires, and voice recording of the interviews. After each interview the recording was transcribed, and a copy sent to the parent, so she could make any corrections if necessary, with a follow up phone call made to receive any feedback from the parent.



About the author

Dr Vicki Cowling, OAM, has worked for recognition of children and families where parents have a mental illness for more than 25 years through research, professional development projects and publications. Vicki works with children and families as an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker in private practice in Melbourne. Vickiriverscowling@gmail.com

The impact of participation varied among individuals as they first agreed to be involved, and then responded to open-ended interview questions

Following the second interview, a letter summarising the interviews and questionnaire responses was sent to each parent with a further follow up phone call. Following this verbal description of the study to parents, they were given a written Information Statement outlining the purpose and procedure for the study. Parents and young people signed consent forms.

This procedure required a commitment from the parents, some of which could be anticipated from the description they were given, other aspects could not, such as the possibility of feeling distress aroused by the research questions and related discussion. By signing the consent form parents showed their commitment to participating in the project although they could withdraw at any time if they wished. All participants chose to remain in the study, and all chose and used a pseudonym.

At each of the above points there were impacts on participants: impacts arising from the procedural steps and impacts from the interview process. There was new information to process, a new role to consider: research participant, and a new relationship to engage in, that of participant and researcher. When asked by their family worker if they would like to participate, parents would have thought about possible intrusions, and possible impacts on them and their family, such as the amount of time that would really be involved, and the questions that would be asked.

Parents then received my phone call, and invited me to interview them at home, they heard the above

description of the study, received a five-page information statement, completed questionnaires, watched a voice recorder being set up, and knew our discussion would be recorded.

The parents preferred to be interviewed at home. In several cases this meant that children were at home too, and sometimes they needed to be attended to during the interview. Being interviewed in the privacy of the home about support issues related to mental illness was considered as possible source of distress for the parents, so in consultation with each parent a plan was made to respond to this if necessary, such as contacting a support person identified by the parent.

The impact of participation varied among individuals as they first agreed to be involved, and then responded to open-ended interview questions.

One grandparent was at first very doubtful she had anything to say that would contribute to the study, but we had our first meeting in her home. A few months later I contacted her about the second meeting, which could not be arranged at that time. A couple of weeks later she phoned me voluntarily to say she was now able to arrange another time. Another grandparent, in responding to the interview questions, found herself reflecting with sadness on regrets from the past, so we took time to think together about this.

The mother of a young child was interested in the conducting of the research study and expressed the hope that one day she could return to study, identifying her hopes for her future. A parent who had experienced

difficult relationships with neighbours who had been judgemental, expressed pride in the improved relationships she had been able to achieve with them.

Two parents who were participating in a therapeutic group described their progress and personal development arising from this; they had found confidence in being able to manage their thoughts and emotions, which was significant for them.

Finally, the impact of participation for some parents could be seen in their expressed hope that by being involved they would be helping others.

Participation in this study had anticipated and unanticipated impacts for parents as they considered their involvement, considered the information about the study, responded to the interview, and during this process found confidence, and reflected on hopes, losses, and positive experiences.

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Beyond marriage equality

Social work research opportunities and the road to understanding the needs of transgender community

HEMAL SENARATH RATHNAYAKE



About the author

Hemal Senarath Rathnayake is one of the youth and family support workers and a group facilitator for JellyBeans program at Open Doors Youth Service in Brisbane. He is passionate about working with transgender and gender diverse young people to bring about positive outcomes. Hemal is a proud member of LGBTIQAP+, sister girl and brother boy community and has been an active member in both volunteer and paid capacity.

The passing of the marriage equality plebiscite signaled the growing acceptance of gay and lesbian individuals by the Australian public. There is a need for this acceptance to extend to the rest of the LGBTIQAP+ and sister girl and brother boy community. Out of this population transgender individuals are those whose gender identity differs to varying degrees to the sex they were assigned at birth and is estimated as roughly 250,000 of the Australian population.

Current research indicates that the overall health and wellbeing outcomes of transgender people are significantly poorer compared to the general population. This is evident in the fact that transgender people are one of the groups most at risk of experiencing negative mental health outcomes, including self-harm and suicide. This is not due to their gender identity but rather the discrimination and stigma they experience in all areas of their lives.

The cis-gender and heteronormative views of gender identity mean that the discrimination faced by transgender individuals often starts closer to home with family and friends and extends to other areas of their lives as well. For example, young gender diverse people I work with share experiences of social isolation through peer rejection and bullying, issues with school, university and work due to prejudice of others about their gender diversity. This is a particularly difficult issue for these young people to endure as the anti-discrimination laws are there to protect but sometimes are just not abided by, leaving transgender people feeling let down by the law and systems that are meant to protect them.

The most significant discrimination transgender individuals experience occurs within the public health system, which fails to recognise transgender healthcare in Medicare. This means transgender people seeking gender affirmation surgeries have significantly

higher out of pocket expenses. They also encounter experiences of private health insurers refusing to cover costs related to these vital medical procedures that are evidenced to alleviate gender dysphoria. This stands in stark contrast to most European countries and the USA where transgender health care is officially recognised by healthcare systems enabling the provision of necessary hormone therapy and gender affirmation surgeries. Moreover, transgender people can experience bias from healthcare professionals due to their lack of knowledge and at times practitioner's religious and cultural beliefs can create even more barriers to the provision of empathic services.

In addition, the intersectionality of being a transgender individual and coming from another marginalised group can exacerbate discrimination. For example, being a transgender individual who has an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander heritage, comes from a cultural and linguistical diverse background, has a disability, lives in a rural or remote area, and/or has a low socio-economic status.

The fundamental values of the social work profession are to protect human rights and fight for social justice. Social work research can inform and uphold these values by providing evidence for ethical practice that guides practitioners. Globally, social work research about transgender population and the issues they face is limited.

Most research currently comes from the USA followed by Europe. Some of the key focuses of this research include building understanding of transgender individuals' interactions with the healthcare system, the impact of gender dysphoria on the individual and their family, exploring risk factors for negative mental health outcomes and pathways to care, defining inclusive practice, and social work education on transgender experience.

In Australia, the scarcity of social work research about transgender people is obvious. There have been fewer than 10 academic articles published on the subject in the last decade within social work literature. Research could address the significant evidence gap and build a broader and more in-depth pool of knowledge for social workers to draw upon to undertake more informed practice. Given the various experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation of transgender Australians it is vital that more research is undertaken with and about this community to truly understand their experiences and uphold social justice.

Social work research has a great opportunity to explore the experiences of the Australian transgender community and the impacts social work service provision, advocacy and lobbying could have on their well-being. Some key opportunities include exploring the current understanding of transgender people held by

practitioners in the field. For example, it would be useful to develop social work knowledge regarding how to best support and understand the needs of this community, which includes using sensitive language and recognising the importance of correct pronoun usage. Secondly, how transgender individuals navigate the healthcare system and ways to improve overall experiences.

Furthermore, Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards identify gender as an area that is covered in the education curriculum. It is unclear if gender identity is an area that should be taught. Therefore, it is up to the discretion of individual universities to include course content about this area. Due to this flexibility and variability on course content requirements students and academic staff have limited understanding of this community. For example, there are many international students studying social work in Australia who are likely to come from countries that actively or covertly discriminate against the transgender population. Consequently, there is a need for universities to provide safe spaces that allow students to come to terms with differences rather than be challenged by ethical social work practice that requires social workers to work empathetically and without judgment of transgender communities. Thus, more research in this area could build contemporary social work practice in the field and will allow people to feel more competent and be critically

Research could address the significant evidence gap and build a broader and more in-depth pool of knowledge for social workers to draw upon to undertake more informed practice

reflective on their own assumptions and beliefs.

Discrimination and marginalisation are a reality for most if not all transgender Australians. In my experience, I am yet to meet a member of this community who has not experienced targeted discrimination due to their gender diversity. Therefore, social work research could provide evidence and knowledge to workers to be leaders of change and justice that is needed by this community.

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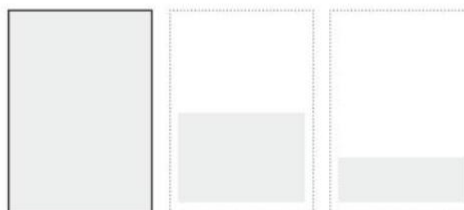
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