

Social Work **Focus**

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AASW
Australian Association
of Social Workers

75
YEARS



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Melbourne office

Level 7, 14–20 Blackwood Street

North Melbourne VIC 3051

PO Box 2008, Royal Melbourne Hospital

VIC 3050

P: 03 9320 1022

aasw.asn.au

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

Freecall: 1800 630 124

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HORIZON CAREER CENTRE

horizon@aasw.asn.au

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Branches

Australian Capital Territory

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New South Wales

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aaswnt@aasw.asn.au

Queensland

aaswqld@aasw.asn.au

South Australia

aaswsa@aasw.asn.au

Tasmania

aaswtas@aasw.asn.au

Victoria

aaswvic@aasw.asn.au

Western Australia

aaswwa@aasw.asn.au

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Editorial and advertising enquiries

Marketing and Communications Officer

P: 03 9320 1005

editor@aasw.asn.au

www.aasw.asn.au

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EDITORS

Noel McMahon

Marketing and Communications Officer

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Going forward with our Strategic Plan



VITTORIO CINTIO
AASW National President

I thoroughly enjoyed working with the Board, the Branch Presidents, and our CEO on our new two year Strategic Plan. We were helped by a very able consultant, Belinda Moore who really challenged us on how to better engage with every part of our membership.

In developing the plan, we agreed that there are five areas where we must do well.

These are:

- mobilising our members to take collective action- targeted to improving the things our profession and our communities care about
- representing our members interests to government, other agencies and the public
- building our social work community, on and offline, so that we can connect directly with each other, for mutual support and sharing solutions to our challenges
- creating better pathways for career development and professional advancement
- serving our members so that they are delighted with our products, services publications and events.

You will all be keenly aware that we are working in an often hostile political and economic environment. We are coming out of a pandemic that has exacerbated inequality.

Supporting social workers
and empowering the
profession to make a
positive difference



We are working with governments that choose to minimise the threats to humanity brought on by climate change, use outsourcing as a way of diminishing service to our communities, and dismiss the aspirations of our First Nations peoples.

All the more reason to build a strong AASW, where we have each other's backs as a voice for high standards, good ethics, and social justice.

I therefore commend our Strategic Plan 2021-2023 to you.

Vittorio Cintio

Vittorio Cintio



Seeking Professional Identity

Undertake a search about the subject of Professional Identity and there are countless excellent definitions and an all most endless stream of papers and websites discussing the topic, and for very good reasons.

Almost as an elusive term to define is Social Work. So, when we put the two together as "Social Workers' professional identity", it is no wonder those in other professions and the outside world can at times be more than a tad confused.

We could workshop the detail forever, but in general terms, I believe Professional Identity has two distinct characteristics:

- a view of self in a profession, based on individual's beliefs, values, motives, and experiences and
- as the cornerstone of an organisation, that provides the ethical frameworks in which to work, and consider the values and the behaviours expected by our profession, colleagues, service users and the general public.

Every profession needs to promote its services and knowledge and while as social workers we are aware of our own work and the work of our colleagues, historically we have been too busy, are not natural self promoters, or haven't put a proper value on our unique knowledge and expertise.

As a profession historically we have often neglected to share the good news about our work, leaving both the public and the media with only a vague and general understanding of the profession, that overshadows its diversity, the importance of our specialised skills and the crucial roles that social workers undertake in our community.

With all that in mind the creation of a strong Professional Identity and improving how social workers are perceived, valued, and sought after has been a crucial part of the development of the AASW's [Strategic Plan 2021-2023](#) and I would encourage everyone to take the time to look at this important document.

The Strategic Plan sets out the direction we will take for the next two years and one of the key areas of emphasis is advancing a strong identity for the social work profession by:

Building Pathways into the Profession

Developing credential pathways to clearly demonstrate competency and skill set within a specialisation.

Facilitating Pathways

Helping provide social workers with career pathways, the means to identify the best career pathway, and their associated education and credentialling needs.

Promoting the Profession

Campaigning to stakeholders to position the profession as valuable and integral.



CINDY SMITH

Chief Executive Officer

In this edition of *Social Work Focus* ([page 8](#)) we are fortunate to have an interesting article on the topic of professional identity that I would encourage everyone to read.

It is written by one of our Members, Dr Bernadette Moorhead, a lecturer in the social work and human services discipline at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga and whose research and teaching, focuses on Professional Identity in social work, as well as support and development needs of newly qualified practitioners.

With the multiple challenges currently before us as a society, there has rarely been a time with a greater need for a clearly defined, well respected, well-trained and highly skilled social work profession. The next two years promise to be an inspiring and exciting time for AASW Members.

Cindy Smith

Social Work Australia

One year on

In June 2020, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) officially launched Social Work Australia, a digital community dedicated specifically to the social work profession. This community was intended as a forum for participating in discussions on important and current issues relating to the social work field.

By developing a digital community that could be accessed from anywhere across Australia, the Association aimed to provide members with an opportunity for connection that transcended physical barriers such as location. A year has now passed since the official launch and Social Work Australia continues to add value to AASW Membership.

New developments

The Association continuously strives to improve and enhance the Social Work Australia community. From the way that it looks, to the way that it works, our digital community has experienced some incredible changes within its first year.



Bell Notifications

To ensure that our users never miss a thing, we made bell notifications a priority for Social Work Australia. These notifications provide users with a quick and convenient way to keep track of the activity that is relevant to them. Whether you've received a comment on your post or have been tagged by another user, our bell notifications ensure that you're the first to know. If you haven't seen them already, you'll find these notifications in the top right corner beside your username.

Log into [Social Work Australia](#) and check out your notifications.



Group Requests

Social Work Australia was developed to help AASW Members connect based on their fields of practice or interests. Therefore, it was important that we hear from our members about what types of groups they wanted to see within the community. In addition to developing a Group Request form, the Association also produced an [Information About Submitting a Group Request](#) resource that outlined the guidelines and process of submitting a request.

Do you have a great idea for a group? Log in and [submit your request](#).



Group List

As the Social Work Australia community continues to grow, as does the groups available for users to join. To improve the visibility of available groups, the Association set out to develop a more visually appealing and functional way of displaying the Groups list. The new design showcases a grid format that features a group icon and button, in addition to other details such as Group Owner, Number of Members and Date of Last Activity. Additionally, the groups are now displayed in alphabetical order, making it easier for users to locate the groups that may be of interest to them.

Log into Social Work Australia and [join the groups](#) that interest you!



How to Guide

To help support our users, the Association developed a '[How to Use Social Work Australia](#)' resource. This how-to guide provides instructions on how to perform basic tasks such as navigating the menu bar, creating a post and submitting a group request. These basics provide users with the foundation of knowledge that they need to actively engage and be part of the Social Work Australia community.

Check out the '[How to Use Social Work Australia](#)' resource.



Feedback Survey

In January 2021, the Association distributed a survey to Social Work Australia users that asked them to provide their feedback. This survey provided valuable information about the demographics and behaviours of users and provided insights into what future improvements could be made. The overall feedback received was positive and reaffirmed that Social Work Australia was a valued benefit of AASW Membership.

The findings of the survey were made available to users in an article published in Social Work Australia, entitled '[Social Work Australia Survey Results](#)'. This article provided a visual summary of the data that was collected.

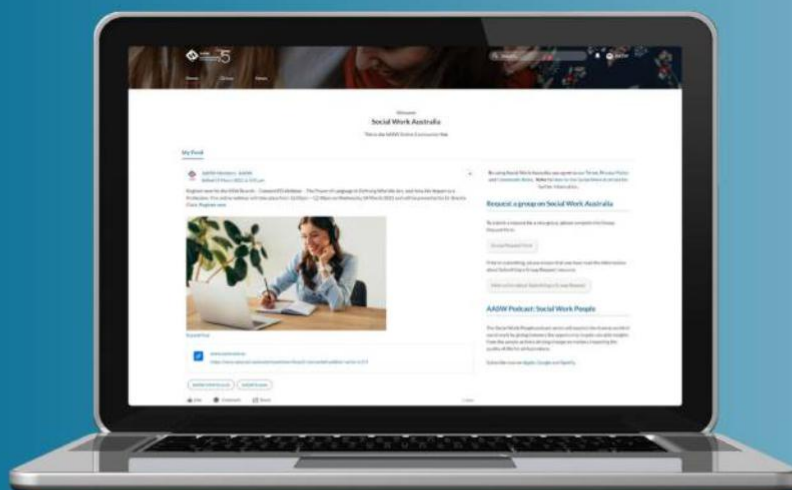
The future of Social Work Australia

The past year has been incredible for the Social Work Australia community. It has been a year of growth, new developments and valuable insights, and the next year is sure to be even better. The Association have a range of fantastic features and improvements planned for Social Work Australia, so be sure to stay tuned for the latest updates.



Social Work Australia

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Professional identity

What it is and how do I get one?

DR BERNADETTE MOORHEAD



About the author

Dr Bernadette Moorhead

BSW (Hons), PhD – is a lecturer in the social work and human services discipline at Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga. Her research and teaching focuses on professional identity in social work, as well as support and development needs of newly qualified practitioners. You can reach Bernadette via email: bmoorhead@csu.edu.au

Finding my Professional Identity

When I started my first social work position as a counsellor, I was excited but also terrified. Throughout my first year of practice, I constantly agonised over the question, am I doing this right? After six months, when I started to feel more settled in my job, a conversation with a supervisor turned everything I thought about my practice on its head. I cannot recall the entire conversation but at one point my supervisor said to me, "Bernie you are a counsellor first, and a social worker second." I balked when I heard that statement and walked away uncomfortable and frustrated. There was no ill intent in what my supervisor said, I simply need to reflect on my unexpected reaction.

Over the coming days, I thought to myself, "hang on, I didn't study for all those years to put my social work qualification in the background!" Becoming a social worker meant everything to me. During my studies, I felt like I had found a home within the values and ethics of social work. I had found my people and felt that I belonged. With these thoughts swirling in my head, I came to realise I had not articulated my professional identity and how to be a social worker in my counselling position. That uncomfortable conversation became a turning point not only in my practice but my eventual research and teaching career, which has centred on professional identity in social work over the last 11 years.

Challenges to Professional Identity: What is social work?

Professional identity comprises shared features and interests of an occupation group, especially in terms of values and ethics, knowledge, and skills (Beddoe, 2013; Webb, 2017). Sounds somewhat simple, but debates have been raging across many professions for decades about the boundaries we can place around who can claim group membership and professional identity.

In order to articulate those shared features and boundaries, we need to be able to answer the question, "What is social work?" I pose this question to final year social work students as part of preparing them for qualified practice. I tell them they have to come up with an answer that is no longer than one concise sentence and it cannot contain any academic jargon that members of the public would not immediately understand. So how do they do? Well, the answers most students provide would be very fitting for an academic paper, but not so much as an explanation to a client. They often litter their responses with terms like empowerment, self-determination, change agent, etc. Lovely terms, but would that really work when introducing yourself to a new client?

It is perhaps no surprise then that many professions and members of the public don't really understand social work. In Australia, we were reminded of this problem in recent years when the profession had to campaign for the restoration of Medicare



rebates for accredited mental health social workers (Mendes, McCurdy, Allen-Kelly, Charikar & Incerti, 2015).

Our challenges with professional identity go back to our origins. We have often been accused of not being a profession with a unifying identity because we are not regulated in many jurisdictions, and frequently draw from other knowledge bases within fields such as psychology, sociology and science. Such debates also occur at the international level, as we have often sought to balance identifying universal features of social work, while embracing local diversities (Moon, 2017). One thing we can all seem to agree upon is that there are no easy answers to the question, what is social work?

I recall these themes and challenges coming up when I interviewed a small group of newly qualified social workers about professional identity for my doctoral studies (Moorhead, Bell & Bowles, 2016). When we talked about how to define social work, they would often start by saying it is difficult because we are so diverse and we work in diverse fields (Moorhead, 2018). They also

raised concerns about sustaining their professional identity when working in generic jobs alongside a range of occupations, which prompted many of them to wonder what makes social work distinct (Moorhead, 2019a)? Consequently, many of them made it their mission to clarify, express and foster professional identity. Like me, they too were passionate about what they had gained from their studies and wanted to ensure their social work qualification was not put in the background.

Not only are there differing opinions within social work, but the nature of our profession has always been influenced by a range of external stakeholders, especially socio-political institutions that have their own agendas (Dent, 2017). These agendas become apparent to me whenever I have an informal conversation with a fellow social worker, who asks me about my research. As soon as I mention professional identity, their eyes light up and the conversation shifts to their experiences in the workplace. I love these conversations because I can see the passion many social workers have about the importance of professional identity,

but also their concern. So often we talk about how challenging it is to enact our shared value base because we work in complex organisations and systems that do not always align with our worldviews. As many educators, including myself, have said to students, we have to be prepared to be disliked, because sometimes we are the only dissenting voice trying to stand up for social justice and human rights issues. As such, pursuing and maintaining professional identity can be exhausting.

Opportunities for Enhancing Professional Identity in Social Work

Some of these challenges to professional identity may seem insurmountable but I have had the pleasure of witnessing resiliency, creativity, and collective efforts within our profession. For example, the campaign to restore the status of accredited social workers shows how we can build professional identity together when we rally around a common cause (Mendes et al, 2015). There are also so many things social workers do on a daily basis to reinforce

and express their professional identity. I was honoured to share in the wonderful enthusiasm of newly qualified social workers who talked about the importance of fostering their professional identity through lifelong learning, networking and supervision (Moorhead, 2019b). While many of these experiences occurred in formalised relationships and professional development workshops, informal everyday interactions were also very powerful and prompted them to critically reflect upon how they articulated and expressed professional identity (Moorhead, 2019b). Even in my own practice, some of the fondest memories I have as a counsellor were when I would turn around at my desk and ask my colleagues, so what do you think of this situation?

Another theme that I constantly reflect upon still, is the emphasis the participants placed on the shared values and worldviews expressed in our codes of ethics (Moorhead, 2019a). These codes, as well as

other professional documents, like the practice standards, express a shared language that can promote professional identity (Laragy, Bland, Giles & Scott, 2013). In my research, the participants described our values as a unifying feature of our profession that also allows for diversity to flourish. I will never forget one participant saying that we all head towards common goals, and we each have our own unique way of getting there. To me, such insights cut through all of the debates about professional identity by emphasising the importance of coming together and defining social work through our shared features, while also embracing diverse ways of achieving our goals.

The beauty of our profession is that there are amazing social workers employed not only across a range of fields, but also levels of practice, from frontline casework, to team leadership and upper management, as well as within professional associations across the globe. We can all contribute

to promoting professional identity through expressing our values on a daily basis, which can have flow on impacts across our teams, organisations and communities. An encouraging word to a newly qualified social worker can really help validate their growth and development of professional identity, just as a social work manager who ensures professional development and supervision are central to a culture of learning in an organisation (Moorhead, 2019b). And finally, broader collective action at national and international levels through associations like the AASW and the IFSW, where we continually codify social work values, as well as advocate for our roles, all contribute to the building blocks of professional identity. This is why I teach and research professional identity as a multilevel experience that requires individual and collective efforts.

The beauty of our profession is that there are amazing social workers employed not only across a range of fields, but also levels of practice, from frontline casework, to team leadership and upper management, as well as within professional associations across the globe



Conclusion

There is no single or fixed answer to the question, "What is social work?", but we all arguably have a responsibility to be able to answer that question within the particular context of our work at this point in time. Doing so promotes our own professional identity, as well as contributes to educating others about our profession. When we talk with each other, family, friends, service participants and other professions, we need to be our own best advocates and promote our profession by conveying what it means to be a social worker. Rather than starting with the statement, 'we are so diverse' it is more helpful to start with the common features that are a focal point and basis for our professional identities.

So, how would you answer that question right now - what is social work? One of my favourite answers to that question came from a second year social work student from about 5 years ago (full credit to Teagan), who responded, "We are a profession that advocates and promotes wellbeing of those in need." It is not a perfect answer, but it certainly is concise and emphasises our professional status that involves advocating in broader systems, while also working with individuals and communities. It goes a long way to capturing the multilayered nature of our profession without overly academic jargon. However, it would probably need some further tweaking if I was talking with a client or even my own family. I invite you to keep this conversation going by talking about ways of fostering professional identity within your teams and networks. I also challenge you to come up with a better answer to the question - what is social work?

•

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A person is walking a tightrope over a deep chasm. The person is in a crouched position, balancing on a thin wire. The background is a light, hazy sky. A large, light blue circle is overlaid on the left side of the image, partially obscuring the rock face of the chasm. The title 'Opportunities versus Risks?' is written in a large, bold, blue font across the middle of the image.

Opportunities versus Risks?

Social work offers rich opportunities for practice diversity, specialisation, change and growth over the course of one's career trajectory. This breadth and flexibility are key strengths and attractions of the profession.

With such opportunities however also come responsibilities: to proactively identify areas for practice development; to engage in ongoing professional training and supervision; to be on the front foot with respect to risk management; and to engage in ethical practice within your scope of capability, expertise and experience.

Recognition and critical examination of **opportunity versus risk** is particularly pertinent as social workers move into new areas of practice or consider new practice pathways. It is at these junctures that ethical dilemmas commonly arise, and where they can thus be best mitigated.

When faced with opportunities to extend one's practice, it is appropriate for social workers to consider or question their practice proficiency and/or ability. That is: *Do I have the skills to do this work? Am I adequately prepared? What support or further training may I need to take on this work? Am I supporting the client's best interests if I take on this opportunity?*

The [AASW Ethics Consultation service](#) often supports social workers faced with such dilemmas, and views these questions as evidence of sound critical, reflective practice, and as opportunities for members to *consider and plan* for both the opportunities and potential risks associated with any new practice direction or decision.

Specifically, it is the experience of the service that 'slippery slope' ethical dilemmas (and at times quite serious practice issues) can typically emerge when social workers, at any stage of their career, commence new roles or make practice decisions without sufficient planning, training, risk mitigation, targeted supervision, and critical reflection regarding their strengths, development needs and potential conflicts/vested interests. In the absence of such preparedness, new practice opportunities can be quickly undermined by otherwise avoidable challenges.

Private practice challenges

The increasing opportunities for social workers in private practice or 'fee-for-service' settings can also bring particular ethical challenges. As more social workers pursue private employment outside of traditional organisational settings (notably in the areas of mental health, court/legal practice and via disability support under the NDIS), they are also increasingly required to develop and hone skills outside of the typical sphere of social work training, education and knowledge. These skills include, but are not limited to:

- » [Business practice and administration](#)
- » Marketing, promotion and liaison with stakeholders – such as GPs
- » Understanding and adherence to government funding schemes [such as Medicare](#)
- » Risk management, such as the development of comprehensive policies and procedures, holding client risk, [maintaining child-centred practice](#), and [acquiring appropriate insurance](#)
- » Understanding of, and application of relevant legislation – such as privacy, [mandatory reporting](#), and record sharing
- » Understanding of [report writing paradigms](#) and principles, sound [information management](#) and [case note recording](#)
- » Contract negotiation and implications for practice
- » Understanding of the risks and legal implications of working in private practice, including [responses to legal requests and subpoenas](#)

- » Maintaining [professional boundaries](#) and [managing conflicts of interests](#)
- » Adherence to the [AASW Code of Ethics](#) and cooperation with [potential complaints](#).

Given this broad set of evolving skills, any decision to move into private practice should be considered thoughtfully and with external advice/support where appropriate.

This shift towards private practice also reflects broader trends in casualisation felt across the employment landscape. The Ethics Office has noted a growing number of social workers engaged as contractors due to the job market, particularly in the context of the NDIS. For newer graduates, the trend to pursue early private practice opportunities is also observable. This includes both social workers with clear intentions to work in private practice (typically therapeutically), and also those who have taken on contract work by virtue of available employment opportunities alone. Whilst there are potential ethical and practice challenges posed in both circumstances, for newer graduates working as contractors, without access to organisational supports and specific social work training and supervision early in their practice development, the potential for ethical dilemmas are more notable.

Opportunities versus Risk: Common Questions

The Ethics Consultation service often provides support to members seeking to clarify whether they are sufficiently qualified to make the shift into new practice settings, or to deliver interventions outside of their more established areas of expertise. The context of these consultations is commonly related to new employment opportunities and at times employer

expectations, increasingly in the context of contract employment, such as the NDIS. The following is a common such question for example:

"I'm a new graduate, and my employer who I sub- contract from, would like me to undertake Positive Behaviour Support. I'm the only social worker in the team. Am I qualified to do this work?"

In this context, there are indeed opportunities for practice, but also a number of risk factors for consideration. These include: the social worker's individual competency to undertake this specialised form of practice; access to specific training, organisational support and targeted social work supervision; access to appropriate level of insurance; any pressure they may feel to take on work outside of their capability due to employer expectations and funding pressures (i.e. vested interests); and ultimately the level of potential liability they may shoulder as an individual service provider under the NDIS when undertaking this work – which is particularly pertinent should challenges arise.

As such, in this example scenario, while the social worker may meet the broad requirements under the NDIS to undertake this work, whether or not they are sufficiently trained, skilled and supported to do so ethically and with sufficient competence, will much depend on their individual circumstances.

It is also common for members to contact the service once an ethical or practice dilemma has already emerged, and where deficits in expertise and supervision may have been identified. In these consultations, the service strives to provide a space



for critical reflection, discussion and identification of “next steps”, informed by the [AASW Code of Ethics](#), [AASW Practice Standards](#) and the [Mental Health Practice Standards](#) (where necessary).

The following are common areas that members are encouraged to consider when weighing up new practice opportunities against potential risks. Or otherwise (put more simply) guidance to help answer the allusive question of: *Is it ethical for me to do this work?*

Quick tips for consideration

1. Undertake a skills or competency audit

- Do you have the knowledge, skills and experience to undertake this work?
- What evidenced-based models and interventions will you utilise?
- In the context of any deficits or gaps, what targeted training and regular and specific supervision can you pursue?
- Ultimately, asking yourself: *Is it in the best interests of my clients to do this work? Can I do so safely? Am I sufficiently equipped and ready?*

2. Supervision

- What specific supervision do you require as you move into this new area of practice, or to pursue this practice opportunity?
- Depending on the circumstances, this may involve specific practice supervision and/or support from a supervisor with experience in private practice that may mentor your transition from both a clinical and/or business management perspective.
- Refer to the [AASW Supervision Standards here](#)

- Access the [AASW Find a Supervisor Register here](#)

3. Scope of practice

- When asking the question “Am I qualified to do this work?” it is important to question whether this opportunity lies within your scope of practice, and what support and training you may need to strengthen your transition into this new area.
- This question may at times challenge you to turn down opportunities for practice if the work lies too far outside your current level of expertise and scope for growth. That is, if you determine that a decision to say “yes” could undermine the priority of client best interests, safety and outcomes – together with your own integrity and professionalism.

4. When to say “no”, “not now”, “not yet” or “only if”

- It is important to critically reflect on the appropriate times to take on new challenges. A traffic light system might be one way of conceptualising this; that is, recognising when you may need to say “no”, when you can confidently say “yes”, and also what it means to be in the “amber” or growth zone.
- At points of transition, social workers will often (and appropriately) find themselves in areas of amber – reflecting what it means to step outside of our established practice zones and to pursue new opportunities for growth and development. At these junctures, it is important to determine the supports and further training you may need to pursue opportunities safely, and to proceed with caution where necessary. This may include a readiness to say “not yet” in some

instances, or to consider what limitations, conditions or step-wise scaffolds you may apply to your practice as you develop and hone new skills safely and appropriately.

- It is also valuable to consider factors such as potential conflicts and vested interests (i.e. financial, professional), workload pressures, or other stressors in your life circumstances that that may result in a “not now”, “only if” or “sometimes” response. That is, understanding the broader factors that may impact your transition into new practice areas.
- Applying this traffic light system will also coincide with scope of practice issues. For example, if asked to prepare a report for legal purposes, you must be informed by the scope and parameters of your work with your client, and not move into conjecture and opinion. Alternatively, when offered a new referral, it is important to consider whether you are the appropriate professional given the client’s presenting needs and circumstances.

5. Risk management

- It is vital to get on the front foot when preparing for professional risks and challenges.
- A core of risk management requires you to i) understand your areas of expertise, scope of practice and models of service delivery, and ii) apply processes, boundaries and supports around your practice, particularly in the context of difficulty.
- If working with children and families, questions may include: *Do you have clear consent forms and policies? When writing your case notes, do you have a risk mitigation mindset in place in case*

your records are requested or subpoenaed? Further, [what is your plan should parents disagree about a child's access to counselling or demand a copy of the child's notes?](#)

- When setting up your business, negotiating contracts, or when faced with legal requests (such as subpoenas), obtaining legal advice may be a prudent investment against future risk.
 - Full AASW members have access to the AASW Master insurance policy. Understanding the scope of this policy, including its exclusions, is essential, in particular when considering new practice opportunities that may involve heightened risk, when expanding your private practice to include multiple staff, or if your intended practice may not strictly fall under the scope of social work education and training. Further information about [insurance is available here](#).
- 6. Business preparedness in private practice**
- Consider your private practice model. Are you a sub-contractor on a temporary basis? Are you working as part of an established multidisciplinary clinic/practice on a contract basis with access to organization supports and systems? Or are you establishing your own autonomous private practice setting? The fee-for service structures under which you practice (and your associated access to supports) will inform the types of risk mitigation strategies and systems you may need to consider.
 - Consider the implications of contracts. Are there any clauses with respect to access and ownership of case records, conditions after ceasing employment, and who holds responsibility for client risk management? Further upon transition into or between private practice settings, are there any conditions or restrictions that might benefit from legal advice?

- Lastly, consider the expectations of both funders and other stakeholders (such as GPs), and how to ethically maintain client centred practice in the context of stakeholder communications.
 - Refer to the following [self-employment guidelines](#) as well as these related to [Information management](#)
- 7. Conflicts of interests, boundaries and vested interests**
- It is important to consider if you have any vested interests in accepting new practice opportunities
 - For example: *Could your sources of referral impact your capacity to undertake objective practice? How might your financial and business imperatives (and even stressors), impact your decisions to take on new practice that may otherwise be outside the scope of your experience and capacity. What risks may this pose to clients and your professional integrity and standing if pursued?*
 - Given these interests and conflicts, it is important to plan how you might manage situations where the outcomes of your practice are counter to a stakeholder's objectives or interests - and if you have blind spots in these contexts. For example, should a lawyer contact you to conduct a family court or drug and alcohol assessment for their client, how might you maintain objectivity and guard against potential vested interests given the referral and income source?

8. Telehealth

- As telehealth and remote services become more normalised and available in the wake of COVID-19 and the expansion of Medicare rebates, it is important that social workers consider both the opportunities and risks of engaging in telehealth more frequently.

- This includes safety planning specific to the client's location, such as determining how to report to authorities should issues or risks emerge therapeutically, and consideration of other local referral sources to augment your practice if required. Consideration should also be given to time differences when setting up appointments, boundaries regarding communication, confidentiality, privacy and consent protocols, and payment methods.
- It is also important for social workers to be cognisant of the fact that by using more informally perceived modes of communication for service provision, professional boundaries may become more fragile.
- The following Ethical Guidelines may also be referred to:

[Social media, information and communication technology Part 1 - Email, text message and mobile phone use](#) [Blurring the boundaries](#)

[Social Media, information and communication technology Part 2 - Social networking](#)

[Social media, information and communication technology Part 3 - Providing social work services online and remotely](#)

Recognition and critical examination of **opportunity versus risk** is an important paradigm for all social workers moving into new areas of practice. This article presents a summary of some of the factors social workers may consider to help avoid ethical pitfalls, as they pursue opportunities for continual growth, professional fulfillment, skill development and practice excellence. The AASW Ethics Services welcomes members to contact the service to discuss such issues via ethicsconsult@asw.asn.au.

Reconciliation Action Plan update

The Association continues to drive our Reconciliation Action Plan forward, and for the past few months, around the country, we have been focused on bringing to life the theme for this years' National Reconciliation Week "More than a word. Reconciliation takes action."

Running from 27 May - 3 June, National Reconciliation Week requested people take their awareness and knowledge of Reconciliation and use it as a platform for more substantial, impactful, and brave action.

Underlying this is the recognition and acceptance of the fact that for more than 65,000 years the land, on which we live and work, was and still is Aboriginal land and that sovereignty was never ceded.

Events delivered around the country included:

Thank you to the RAP Working Group Members and Chair Professor Susan Green, Melissa Carter, Shirley Young and Linda Ford for their wonderful voluntary work that has generated enormous support and goodwill towards reconciliation throughout the organisation and leadership group.



NEW SOUTH WALES

Stay'n Deadly and Stay'n In - an online event about an innovative model of care to ensure Aboriginal patients receive health care.

The event was designed to ensure Aboriginal patients receive the care they require when presenting to St Vincent's Emergency.

The webinar presented by Nioka Tyson and Scott Daley is part of a series assisting Social Workers to connect with new ideas and reflect on their own practice. Focusing on connecting with everyday social workers to talk about their practice, ideas and experiences of social work.



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Working In Culture - an online event with more than 80 students registered.

This interactive training supported social work students in understanding ways of embedding culturally appropriate frameworks and practices into their service delivery.

The training was provided by Shirley Young who is an Aboriginal Social Worker and Director of Two Worlds Consultancy.



WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Introducing Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making - was an online event which had 46 members registered.

The presentation provided an overview of the Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) as a process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to have a voice in the decision making of their children in the care system and/or involved with early intervention and prevention services in Child Protection and Family Support.

This online webinar was presented by Glenda Kickett, a AASW member and the Manager, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement at the Australian Childhood Foundation.

During the recent reform and co-design with the Department of Communities, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO's) requested the Department implement AFLD to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have equal input into the decisions which impact the care and protection of their children and young people. Glenda is involved in the reference group for the consultation of the pilot sites and program in WA.

On the website, Glenda mentioned that there would be two pivot sites for Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making in Geraldton region and Mirrabooka, WA and she hopes to keep AASW informed of the progress of the pivot programs.



VICTORIA

In the Melbourne office, in line with the NRW theme that for Reconciliation, we need to take brave and impactful action, and to help us understand what that action might be, we hosted a podcast with Pat Turner AM.

Pat has a long and distinguished career in public and community service includes the renegotiation of the Closing the Gap initiative which resulted in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

During the podcast, Pat provided some useful feedback on our RAP, noting that to make the RAP more impactful, she hoped people would become more interested in the Coalition of Peaks' work of on Closing the Gap and that the AASW would revise its RAP when it is due to reflect its support for that initiative.

If you missed the podcast, we highly recommend you check it out at <https://omny.fm/shows/aasw-social-work-people/brave-and-impactful-pat-turner>

While it was slightly impacted by the snap lockdown in Victoria, we were also pleased to see a number of staff attend additional events in their own time.

July marks NAIDOC week, and we strongly urge you all to get involved, and immerse yourself in learning more about how we, as individuals and as a profession, can take impactful steps to advance reconciliation.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN REGIONAL AND RURAL VICTORIA

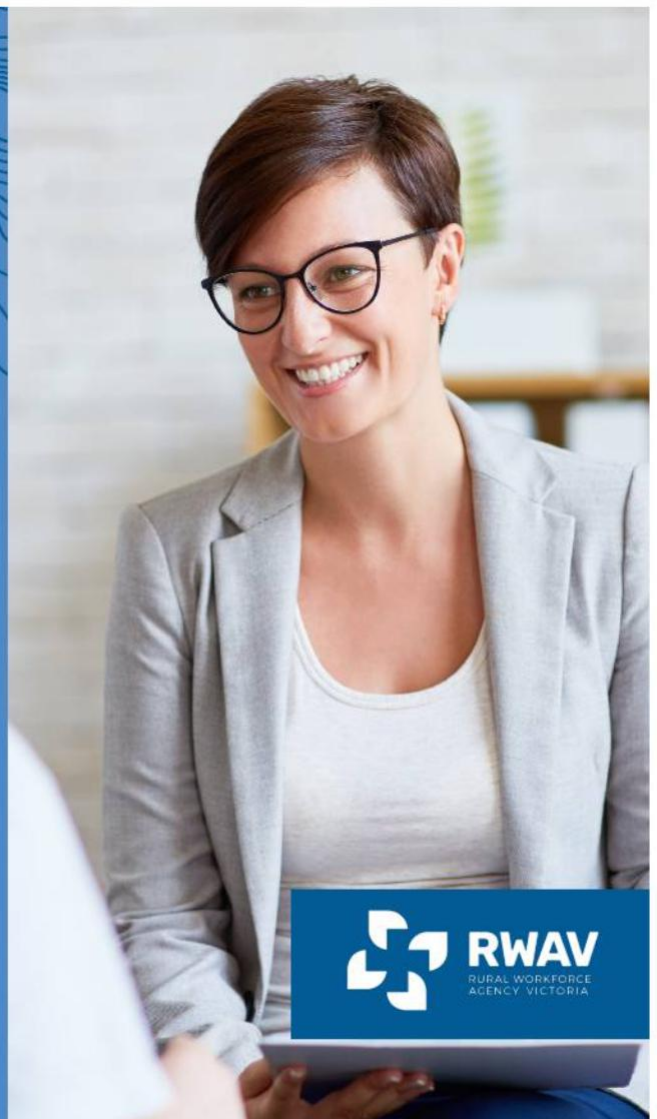
Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) is always looking for social workers who are seeking an opportunity to work in country Victoria.

Thinking about providing outreach services to regional Victoria talk to us now.

RWAV offers candidates support and grants, including relocation and retention bonuses (terms and conditions apply).

Rural Workforce Agency Victoria (RWAV) is a not-for-profit government funded organisation improving health care for rural, regional and Aboriginal communities in Victoria. RWAV provides a range of activities and support to improve the recruitment and retention of health professionals to rural and regional Victoria.

visit www.rwav.com.au or call (03) 9349 7800





South Australian Social Worker of the Year Awards

The South Australian Branch of the AASW has honoured the state's social workers' outstanding and positive contribution to individuals, families and communities, at the inspirational South Australian Social Worker of the Year Awards held in Glenelg.

SA President Patricia Muncey said she was delighted to once again see so much interest in the annual Awards from members, employers and the State Government.

"Our awards are a wonderful opportunity to bring everyone together to celebrate our profession and pay tribute to the tireless commitment that many qualified South Australian social workers provide in their often challenging and complex work."

"For the past six years the prestigious state Awards have showcased the immense diversity, professionalism, commitment and capacity of social work practitioners, teams and organisations, and what they collectively achieve to strengthen the South Australian community.

"Looking at the list of this year's winners I am very proud that we are able to come together to recognise social workers who are at different stages of their careers, from student to advanced practitioner and highlight the breadth and depth of social work practice across South Australia."

"It has been a wonderful evening and I must thank everyone for their hard work and dedication to making it such an outstanding success. My heartfelt congratulations to all the winners, and the amazing category nominees, for their efforts and commitment to the values of social work," she said.

Department for Child Protection (DCP) Chief Executive Cathy Taylor said the department was very proud to be a part of a special night that recognises the important contributions of social workers to the South Australian community.

"Social workers play a critical role in improving the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities, particularly those who are vulnerable. We are pleased to join with the South Australian branch of the AASW to not only deliver these Awards, but highlight the positive impact social workers have across a diverse range of sectors through their commitment to human rights and social justice."

"I congratulate the winners and thank all South Australian social workers for the effort you put in every day to make a difference," she said.



Minister for Child Protection SA, Rachel Sanderson, presenting at the event - www.premier.sa.gov.au/the-team/rachel-sanderson-mp

There were award winners in six categories:



Student of the year

Sher Luhar

proudly sponsored by Centacare Catholic Country

Sher is a final year student in the Master of Social Work from UniSA (current GPA 5.80) and is a lifelong learner with a passion for social work and human services. For the past 10 years, Sher has been directly working with asylum-seeking children, youth and Aboriginal communities experiencing homelessness and mental health issues in Adelaide through Baptist Care SA.



Rural and remote impact

Arminda Graves

proudly sponsored by Uniting Communities

Arminda has been proactive in seeking training and development relevant to the needs of the communities that she serves in the Far West Region of South Australia. Whilst based in the Ceduna office of Centacare Catholic Country SA Arminda has provided support to a range of individuals and families from the broader region, developing a knowledge of local networks that exist to support families and individuals as well as cultural competency and understanding of the range of issues impacting not only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but other cultural groups emerging in the area.



Rising Star

Tara Holland

*proudly sponsored by Flinders Uni
Pictured with Rachel Sanderson MP on left,
Minister for Child Protection*

Tara is a social worker of two years of experience in an Assessment and Support team at the Dept for Child Protection. Tara works tirelessly to enhance the individual and collective wellbeing of identified children and their families. Tara builds rapport with children and their families and develops and maintains constructive relationships with clients and stakeholders to achieve outcomes for children.



Head Heart and Hands

Stacey Gray

proudly sponsored by Hesta

Stacey as a professional Aboriginal woman has made over 20 years of contribution to individuals, community, and families in the social work / human service field. Having held a number of roles with the Department for Child Protection, where she worked for 15 years Stacey moved to Centacare Catholic Country SA in the Recruitment and Assessment Coordinator role for Alternative Care, and was in the role for approximately three years before being successful in her current role as a Senior Aboriginal Case Manager in the TALI program (Transition to Adult Living and Independence).



Supervision in the workplace

Darlene Wyatt

*proudly sponsored by Dr Mary Hood of
ARC - Supervision*

Darlene's Social Work career has spanned over 30 years of practice in the areas of Child Protection, Health, Education, University and currently in the NGO sector, mostly in rural and remote communities. During her career, Darlene has supervised approximately 60 students in most of the fields that she has worked.



Agent of Change

Jessica Dobrovic

*proudly sponsored by Department for
Child Protection*

*Pictured with Rachel Sanderson MP on left,
Minister for Child Protection*
Jessica's primary interest has been in the advance of data informed practice and the use of evidence as a means of providing support for individuals with a high complexity of needs. In this regard her work has been an enabler in the decision making processes at both individual and program levels within Hutt St Centre and across the wider collaboration of services within the inner city of Adelaide. She has influenced, guided and supported the Adelaide Zero project data capacity through her knowledge and foresight and has leveraged her knowledge to be a key driver for advocacy in a range of community led groups and projects.

How to navigate the emotional hazards of work in the social sector

ALISON COUGHLAN

In the social sector, our business is about creating change. Change in the life of individuals, families, communities and society through our spectrum of work across all stages of life, with people from all walks of life.

We apply our skills (technical and interpersonal) to provide care, relief and hope, and to prevent ill health and suffering. The choice to work in this sector is often associated with a passionate personal drive – a sense of vocation, even.

As human beings, we are fundamentally makers of meaning and when we engage in work that is intrinsically linked to our core purpose, it can bring great fulfilment and meaning to our lives. However, as we go about this work, the passion and heart that we put into it, that are essential to our effectiveness, also put us at risk.

What we witness, and the emotions that we feel can drain us of our energy and wellbeing. The separation between work and the rest of our life can blur. Our work can impact our life both positively and negatively. And our personal challenges can also impact our capacity to sustain the energy and wellbeing we need for our work.

Despite warning signs – if we notice them – we often just keep going, putting our own needs aside as we continue to turn up to serve our families, our communities and the beneficiaries of our work.

Beyond just sustaining ourselves, we can become depleted and, at worst, reduced to nothing as the literal definition of burnout suggests:

“The reduction of a fuel or substance to nothing through use or combustion.”¹

Burnout is a health hazard that we each need to take very seriously, now.

1. Oxford University Press. (2020). Burnout. On Lexico.com, available at <https://www.lexico.com/definition/burnout>



About the author

Alison Coughlan is the author of *The Health Hazard: Take control, restore wellbeing and optimise impact*. Alison draws on more than 25 years' experience in the health and social sectors and her personal experience of reaching, sustaining and recovering from burnout, after which she charted a new, more fulfilling and sustainable path for her work and her life. Alison helps health and social sector professionals to optimise the impact they make and, in so doing, do their best work and live their best life.

Find out more at www.alisoncoughlan.com



What you can do to successfully navigate the emotional hazards of your work

1. Focus on your wellbeing

It is only through a focus on your wellbeing – and working to get yourself to a place where your energy and wellbeing are optimised – that you will be able to learn and grow, to take risks, to face challenges, and to be resilient when crises inevitably occur.

2. Don't wait for someone to rescue you

You are the only person who can make the choice for yourself to chart a different course in your work and your life. No one is coming to your rescue – you need to rescue yourself.

3. Put yourself first

Putting yourself first is, in fact, the only way that you can be of service to others in an optimal and sustainable way. A lack of self-compassion limits your capacity to sustain your efforts. It limits the impact you make and, as a result,

also limits the connection between your work and your sense of purpose and meaning. It affects the lives and work of others in a negative way and ensures you become part of the problem, not the solution.

4. Accept 100 per cent of personal responsibility for yourself

You are the only person who can choose to chart a different course in your work and life. Be 100 per cent responsible for you, the choices you make and the consequences of those choices – for how you respond to the circumstances of your life and work, and to the behaviour of others. *Do not* take responsibility for the choices of others or for their behaviour. That is their responsibility.

5. Create a Personal Impact Plan

Create your personal plan that guides you to make an optimal impact but not

at the cost of your wellbeing and other things that matter to you most in life. Tangible goals, feasible actions and an enabling mindset to chart a course to 'better'.

6. Set an example for others

We need self-determined leaders, at every level in every role, who have energy to burn, and who reject burnout as inevitable and the norm. This has to start with getting ourselves in good shape – so that we can go the distance and so that we can then influence the much-needed reforms in our sectors.

You matter, the work you do matters, and your life matters too. The primary responsibility for you starts and ends with you, and you need to take control, restore wellbeing and optimise impact.

So, what do you do?

Right now across Victoria there are opportunities for people who want to make a difference in a career that's meaningful, challenging and rewarding.

From social workers and educators, to communicators and researchers – the family violence sector needs people with different skills, experiences and backgrounds for roles as diverse as the communities we serve.

Be part of a team working to make positive change and end family violence.

Visit the jobs hub at
familyviolence.vic.gov.au/jobs

If you, a child, or another person is in immediate danger, call Triple Zero (000).
For help and support, call Safe Steps on 1800 015 188.

**What if your
new job was
helping people
affected by
family
violence?**

AASW Member Benefits Program

Members have access to a range of benefits through their AASW Member Benefits Program. Below is a selection of benefits that may be of interest to you. Visit your AASW Member Benefits website for more information and booking details.

The Good Guys Commercial



Are you in need of some new home appliances, whitegoods or office technology?

The Good Guys Commercial Division provides members with great savings on a range of popular brand products for the home and office at commercial pricing*.

Visit your AASW Member Benefits website for more information.

**This arrangement is only available through The Good Guys Commercial Division and is not available in-store. Excludes Agency Brands such as Miele & Asko.*



CrimCheck

CrimCheck is an accredited provider of national history criminal checks and is a web-based service for conducting police checks, making CrimCheck fast, convenient, and accessible from just about anywhere.

The cost for students, new graduates and retired members is \$16.00. The cost for all other members is \$35.50.

Visit your AASW Member Benefits website to get an online criminal history check.

Experience Oz



Experience Oz offers thousands of things to do in Australia and New Zealand in popular regions such as Sydney, Melbourne, Gold Coast, Auckland, Perth, Darwin, Cairns, Alice Springs and Milford Sound to name a few.

You can choose from a range of experiences such as day tours, attractions, zoos & aquariums,

reef trips, theme parks, extreme activities, whale watching and cruises.

Save up to 10% or even more with hot deals where you can receive extra discounts and bonuses.

Visit your AASW Member Benefits website to find something you want to do!



Mantra Group's Departure Lounge

Save up to 50% on accommodation.

With more choice than ever, the Departure Lounge is ready to send you on your next holiday or short break. As a member you can search and book discounted accommodation at selected Peppers, Mantra, BreakFree and Art Series properties throughout Australia.

These rates are exclusive to members and can be booked up to 12 months in advance. Plus, if you can't find a suitable special, you can still book the best available accommodation rate at any of our hotels, apartments, resorts and retreats.

Best rates are found when searching for 3 nights or more and there is more availability when looking further in advance.

Visit your AASW Member Benefits website for more information.

Lenovo



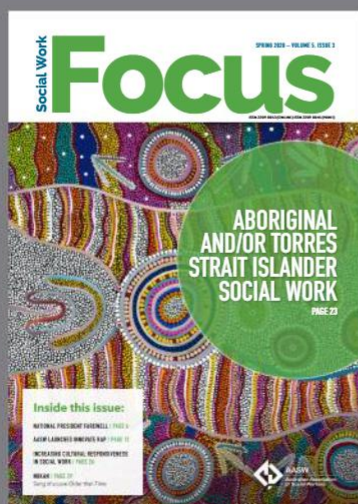
Members have access to the Member Benefits Purchase Program where you can **save up to 20%*** on the public web price on the entire range of Lenovo Laptops, Tablets, Desktops, Monitors and Accessories and access to **special offers** that provide even greater value.

Visit your AASW Member Benefits website for more information.

**Discount based on Lenovo online RRP.*

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Social Work Focus

ADVERTISING

Social Work Focus is the Australian Association of Social Workers' Member magazine. It is published four times a year and is accessible to Members via email and on our website in accessible digital formats, such as PDF, flipbook and a webpage.

You can advertise in *Social Work Focus*.

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	Quarter page (horizontal)	\$365.00	\$1,320.00 (\$330.00 per advert)

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KEY:  Artwork area  Bleed (min 3mm)  Page trim		

Note: Measurements are width x height

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To discuss your advertising needs, contact:

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Phone: 03 9320 1005

Email: editor@asw.asn.au

Supplying Artwork

AASW will only accept final art that is supplied as a print ready, high resolution PDF with minimum 3mm bleed and crop marks. Minimum of 10mm margins are recommended for full page ads. All images must be 300 dpi.

Please send your artwork to editor@asw.asn.au

Please check that the size of your advertisement reflects our specifications.

If your advertisement does not reflect the quality of our magazine, we will contact you before we make any changes to it.

2021 SWF Deadline Dates

2021 deadlines		
Issue	Bookings & artwork	Publication
Autumn 2021	January 29 th	March 5 th
Winter 2021	April 30 th	June 4 th
Spring 2021	July 30 th	September 3 rd
Summer 2021	November 29 th	December 3 rd