

Social Work

Focus

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THE REGISTRATION ISSUE

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF
NATIONAL REGISTRATION

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NEXT EDITION

Contributions for the editorial content of the July/August issue will be accepted until 23 May 2025, with a publication date of w/c 14 July.

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.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We respectfully acknowledge the past and present Traditional Owners and ongoing Custodians of the land. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present, their ancestors and their families.

Join us on social media:



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National President's report: advocating for the future of social work

Welcome.

In this issue, we focus on the work to establish national registration for social workers in Australia. Registration has long been a goal of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), and we are now seeing meaningful progress towards ensuring that all social workers are held to the highest professional standards to support the communities we work with.

This edition brings together voices from across the sector, sharing stories that highlight why registration matters for the safety of the communities we serve. As we reflect on the journey so far, it is also a moment to look ahead, continuing the advocacy that has defined the AASW since its inception 79 years ago.

AASW has a long and proud history of advocating for the profession and the people we support. Since its establishment in 1946, the AASW has worked tirelessly to promote professional standards, uphold social justice, and seek recognition for social workers. Central to this advocacy has been the pursuit of statutory registration—ensuring consistent national standards and greater protection for the public.

On 7 September 1946, social work representatives from across the country came together to form the AASW. This was a defining moment in the professionalisation of social work in Australia, establishing a national body to represent and unify social workers. The founding executive members, led by our first National Board President Norma Parker, set the foundation for a profession committed to high standards, ethical practice, and advocacy for social justice. Lyra Taylor drove social work passionately in this post-war period and built on knowledge from North America as well as her own work in Aotearoa New Zealand and here, to convince the government of the value of establishing a clearer oversight and framework for social work in post-World War II Australia.

As the profession grew, so did the need for a clear set of professional standards. The AASW took the lead in developing the Code of Ethics, Practice Standards, Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards, and professional resources for practitioners. These developments laid the foundation for the standards of the profession. We now need a consistent regulatory framework for all social workers practising in Australia.



JULIANNE WHYTE OAM

AASW National President

Without statutory regulation, social work remains one of the few professions in the health sector without mandatory national registration. The AASW has actively lobbied governments to introduce registration, arguing that it is essential for maintaining public safety and trust, ensuring ethical practice, and supporting workforce mobility.

The AASW will continue to lead the charge toward national registration, and we encourage all members to stand with us in shaping the future of our profession.

Warm regards,

Julianne Whyte OAM
National President

•

CEO's report: unpacking the benefits of social work registration



CINDY SMITH

Chief Executive Officer

The global social work community came together to celebrate World Social Work Day (WSWD) on 18 March 2025. Events were organised across Australia to honour this significant day, providing the opportunity for all to reflect on the profound impact of social workers and their work creating meaningful change. I had the privilege of attending the South Australia event, where I spoke with many members and professionals eager to discuss the future of social work registration.

AASW's national webinar, chaired by National President Julianne Whyte OAM, provided an insightful discussion on this year's theme 'Strengthening Intergenerational Solidarity for Enduring Wellbeing,' reinforcing the vital role social workers play in fostering community resilience. From Perth to Toowoomba, social workers came together to mark this important day, highlighting the strength and unity of our profession. The theme emphasised the importance of fostering connections across generations to build strong and resilient societies, sustain the environment, and share wisdom for a better future.

In this issue of Social Work Focus, we highlight a pivotal need – national registration of social workers. The AASW is advocating to include social workers in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). Over the past three years the AASW has held numerous meetings with politicians and key stakeholders to discuss national registration. As part of this work, the

AASW has been building the case for national registration, including gathering evidence for why registration will improve public health and safety. We're fast approaching the significant change in South Australia with the introduction of the Social Workers Registration scheme, which will take applications for registration from 1 July 2025.

In this issue, you will find several articles that explore the theme of social work registration from distinct perspectives. One article examines the profound impact of coroners' reports on shaping social work legislation, particularly through the lens of the recently enacted Social Worker Registration Act 2021 (SA). It delves into how these reports highlight critical areas where registration under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme is crucial for safeguarding vulnerable people. Another article provides a detailed case study of South Australia's implementation of mandatory social work registration, illustrating the complexities and benefits of state-specific regulatory frameworks within a broader call for a unified national approach.

We also highlight the importance of ongoing professional development in maintaining best practice.

AASW has created the My AASW Social Work Capability Compass self-assessment tool—a valuable resource designed to help social workers evaluate their strengths, skills and identify areas for growth. This tool provides social workers personalised insights to their

career development needs, to continue to be responsive to the changing needs of the communities we serve.

Dive into the thought-provoking articles and the updates on ongoing efforts for national registration in this issue. We continue to advocate for a profession that is recognised, respected, and held to the highest standards of practice.

Warm regards,

Cindy Smith
Chief Executive Officer

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Advocacy: 2025 is our year to push for national social worker registration

The AASW is strongly committed to advocating for the national registration of social workers. Our members and the Board agree that national registration is the priority for the profession.

We have been working for social work to be included in the [National Registration and Accreditation Scheme \(NRAS\)](#), the scheme for Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) registered health professionals in Australia.

NATIONAL REGISTRATION IS IMPORTANT FOR:

- Public safety**
 A public register of practitioners and protection of the title 'Social Worker' ensures that only those with the requisite education and training who practice safely and ethically can work as a social worker
- Professional capabilities**
 All social workers are regulated against consistent, high-quality, national professional standards
- Professional accountability**
 Registration includes statutory powers to investigate professional misconduct and mechanisms to place conditions on practice or to ban a social worker from practising
- Workforce mobility**
 National registration makes it easier for social workers to work across different states and territories in Australia.

There are over 46,000 social workers employed in Australia, and this is growing by 2,700 each year. Only 17,000 social workers are AASW members who formally commit to adhering to the AASW Code of Ethics and Practice Standards.



OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS WE HAVE:

- Held meetings with Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for Health, Mental Health, Child Protection and Family Violence and Heads of Health Departments
- Been developing a detailed submission to Health Ministers which provides evidence to meet the entry criteria to NRAS as specified by government, including:
 - › a review of coronial inquest reports
 - › complaint data from state Health Complaint Commissioners
 - › Auditor General reports and Royal Commission recommendations
- Advocated to a range of stakeholders including Mental Health Commissioners, unions, Chief Allied Health Officers (CAHOs), Children's Commissioners, State Coroners and Ahpra
- Submitted to Commonwealth and State Government consultations including the draft National Allied Health Workforce Strategy, "Unleashing the Potential of our Health Workforce" - Scope of Practice Review and the Independent Review of Complexity in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme - "Complexity Review".

WHERE ARE WE NOW:

The next six months provide an important window to advocate for national registration.

The [South Australia Social Worker Registration Scheme](#) will begin 1 July 2025. This is significant step but leaves the rest of Australia lagging behind South Australia and comparable countries like the United Kingdom, United States, Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Federal Health Minister appointed Sue Dawson in 2024 to lead an

[independent review of the complexity in the NRAS](#). The "Complexity Review" is considering how the NRAS can expand and grow to meet future needs. The report is due in July 2025.

Once the Complexity Review is finalised, Health Ministers will be making major decisions on the future design of the NRAS. Health Ministers have not accepted applications from professions to be included in the NRAS until the completion of the Complexity Review.

This time will be the greatest opportunity in a decade for the AASW and our members to advocate for social workers to be included in the NRAS. If you want to be part of the campaign this year, keep an eye out for communications from the AASW on how we can most effectively advocate together.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Gair is the current Editor of *Australian Social Work*, and Adjunct Associate Professor at James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland.

Highlights from the Australian Social Work Journal

The *Australian Social Work* journal continues to showcase cutting-edge research shaping social work practice across diverse fields, including health, mental health, and community services. AASW members have [free access](#). Take advantage of this today.

FEATURED ARTICLES

Developing a Prioritisation Framework for Social Work Referrals in Australian Hospitals: A Modified Delphi Study

Joanne Hilder et al.

With the growing demand for hospital-based social work services, efficient referral systems are essential. This study uses a Delphi methodology to develop a prioritisation framework that ensures timely intervention for patients in acute care settings. The research highlights key criteria for triaging social work referrals and provides insights into improving resource allocation.

Family Violence Presentations to a Metropolitan Emergency Department During COVID-19: A Retrospective Audit

Stephen M. Quick et al.

This retrospective study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family violence presentations to emergency departments. The findings reveal trends in patient demographics, types of violence reported, and service responses, offering valuable data to inform future crisis intervention strategies.

Reflections from a Community Capacity Building Forum to Support People Bereaved by Suicide

Colleen Carlon et al.

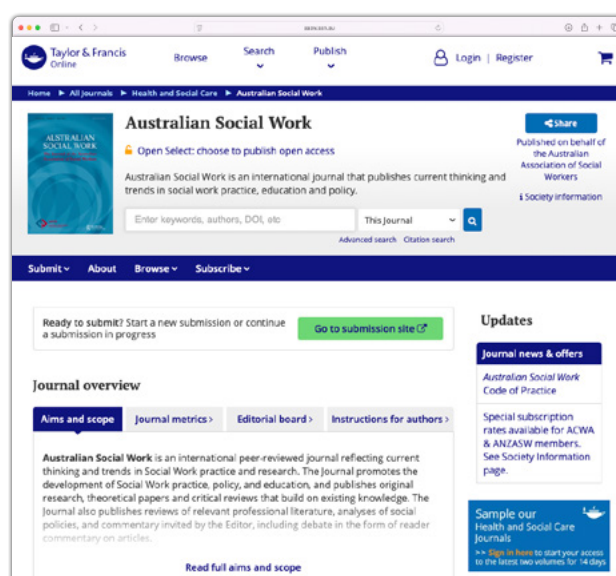
Suicide bereavement presents unique challenges for individuals and communities. This article reflects on a community capacity-building forum aimed at supporting those affected by suicide loss. It discusses key themes emerging from the forum, including collective healing, service gaps, and strategies for enhancing community-led support initiatives.

Mental Health Workers' Perceptions of Transcultural Practice with Young People and Families

Abner Weng Cheong Poon et al.

Cultural responsiveness is crucial in mental health practice. This study explores how mental health workers engage with young people and families from diverse backgrounds. The findings highlight challenges and best practices in delivering transcultural mental health support, advocating for improved training and systemic changes to enhance inclusivity.

Access Australian Social Work at aasw.asn.au to read more. You will be taken to MyAASW if you are not logged in.



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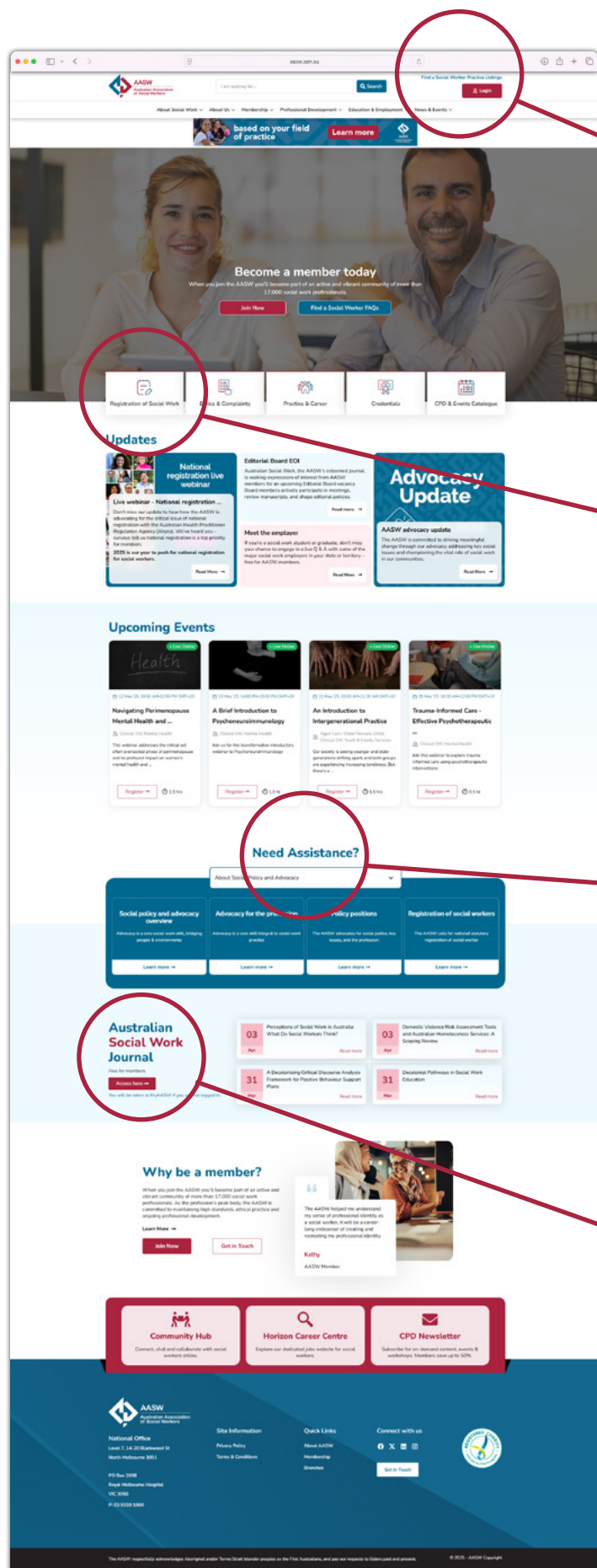
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31 A Decolonising Critical Discourse Analysis Framework for Positive Behaviour Support Plans

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Practice and Career suites: your comprehensive resource hub

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) offers its members an invaluable resource through the Practice and Career suites, accessible via the [MyAASW member portal](#).

These suites are meticulously curated to support social workers at various career stages and across diverse fields of practice. Each suite provides a wealth of tools, templates, articles, videos, and other essential resources, all organised into intuitive subcategories such as Social Policy & Advocacy, Professional Networking, and Credentials.

In March 2025, the AASW expanded the suite to 20 categories, with new additions: Community Development and Management & Leadership.

Highly frequented suites include Private Practice, Mental Health, Disability, and Supervision, reflecting the needs of the social work community.



Enhance your expertise with 30% off AASW CPD packages

AASW has created a series of CPD packages, bringing together our most popular recordings on key topics, including Family Violence, Neurodivergence, and Self-Care. These carefully curated bundles provide social workers with up-to-date knowledge and practical strategies while offering a 30% discount compared to purchasing recordings individually.

Designed to support your professional development, these packages make it easier to gain Category 2 – Skills and Knowledge CPD points at a significant discount, while deepening your expertise in these critical areas.

**Invest in your growth and make
a meaningful impact today**



AASW
Australian Association
of Social Workers

Training

Choose the CPD package that matters most to you:

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Family Violence Package: Gain crucial skills in identifying coercive control, supporting survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable.

The case for social work registration: addressing skills gaps to improve public safety

Coroners' reports play a crucial role in advocating for public safety. The findings from these reports often underscore systemic deficiencies and highlight critical areas where regulatory frameworks, such as the Social Worker Registration Act 2021 (SA), are essential for safeguarding vulnerable people. This article delves into the impact of coroners' recommendations on social work legislation and explores key findings that highlight the imperative for national registration under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS).

Coroners undertake their work to improve public health and safety. Coronial findings have a pivotal role in shaping legislation and government reform. The recommendations of coroners helped lead to the passage of the Social Worker Registration Act 2021 (SA) and the establishment of the South Australian Social Worker Registration Scheme.

Four Australian coroners have made recommendations relating to social work registration in Australia.

Coroners Mark Johns and Anthony Schapel made recommendations for social worker registration following the tragic deaths of Chloe Valentine and Ebony Napier in South Australia. Coroner David Whittle also considered further recommendations to enhance the competence of social worker practice but determined it would be appropriate to await the implementation of the South Australian Social Worker Registration Scheme, though his concerns were noted.

Many coroners have highlighted concerns around professional practice that point to an urgent need for the social work profession to be registered under the NRAS.

Darren J. Bracken, VIC Coroner, made a clear and strong case for social worker registration following the death of 'PFS'.

"Social workers are often employed to work with vulnerable communities. The lack of accountability in this work raises concerning implications for their clients.

National registration and accreditation of social workers would, assist in defining and protecting professional educational and practice standards; defining safe and competent scopes of practice for social works [sic]; requiring mandatory hours of annual continuing professional development in order to ensure skills and knowledge remain up to date.

One of the key benefits of registration and accreditation is an ongoing obligation to maintain and update their knowledge in their field of practice. Without these obligations social workers and counsellors are not currently required to undertake professional development or engage in education outside of the requirements placed on them by their employers resulting in social workers and counsellors being at risk of not being aware of innovations in their respective fields of work to the detriment of their clients.

The need for oversight demonstrated by PFS' social worker/ counsellor in promoting the use of relationships counselling despite the presence of family violence, evidences the need for regulation of counsellors and social workers in Australia." (Darren J. Bracken, Victorian Coroner).

The insights taken from coroners' reports underscore the compelling need for national registration of social workers. These recommendations must be swiftly implemented to uphold public safety and to fortify the professionalism of the social work sector. By implementing national registration and robust professional standards, we can significantly improve health and safety of people in Australia.



The current entry criteria for a profession to be included into the NRAS requires the profession to outline the potential risk of harm to the health and safety of the public. The basis for determining risk or harm includes evidence found in coroners' cases.

Systemic challenges in the delivery of social work services are well recognised. These challenges are compounded by workforce shortages, high caseloads, and the increasing complexity of client needs.

Social workers often operate in environments where decisions must be made under significant time pressure and with incomplete information, further complicated by the presence of intersecting risk factors such as poverty, trauma, and intergenerational disadvantage. These realities highlight the importance of ensuring practitioners have the necessary support, training, and regulatory frameworks in place to meet the demands of their roles.

To satisfy this requirement, the AASW recently analysed five years of coroner reports. The deaths in these reports occurred due to what the coroner has

stated as preventable issues such as child abuse (including filicide, the act of a parent deliberately killing their child) and neglect, mental illness, domestic and family violence and alcohol, drug and substance abuse.

In nearly all coroner reports involving social workers, the coroners identified issues around conducting risk assessments. Assessments, in the context of social work, are structured to identify potential dangers or harm that an individual or group may face. They involve gathering and analysing information about a person's situation, environment, and behaviours to determine the level of risk they may be exposed to—such as harm from domestic violence, child abuse, self-harm, neglect, or other safety concerns.

High-quality assessments are essential for practitioners and agencies to account for the necessary safety considerations and undertake appropriate interventions. Coroners also noted instances where there was a need to improve safety planning or to better connect service users with relevant services and support.

Underlying these reports, coroners have noted the need to improve core social work skills, competence, and training, along with having appropriate supervision arrangements in place.

The national registration of social workers recognises these concerns by establishing nationally consistent standards of practice including recency of practice, underpinned by a program of Continuous Professional Development of training and supervision.

-

Advocacy update

The AASW is committed to driving meaningful change through our advocacy, addressing key social issues and championing the vital role of social work in our communities.

We're advocating for:

- NDIS Advocacy and Social Worker Recognition
- Future psychosocial support arrangements
- 2024 ADHA Allied Health Digital Health Transformation Survey
- Australian Stroke Coalition
- WA Family and Domestic Violence Workforce Capability Framework
- National Plan to End the abuse and mistreatment of older people
- Advocacy with compensable schemes.

NATIONAL INSURANCE DISABILITY SCHEME (NDIS)

The AASW established an NDIS working group in October 2024 and is focused on progressing a range of initiatives aimed at enhancing the role of social workers within the NDIS.

Key actions include:

- Comprehensive literature review to gather evidence on the effectiveness of supports provided by social workers in disability and NDIS
- Advocacy meetings with the Hon Bill Shorten and his Advisor regarding timelines for new guidelines, ongoing issues experienced by social workers during transition period, future registration processes and new NDIS Navigator roles
- Developing a range of resources including a NDIS Social Worker flyer and a position paper on the new Navigator roles

- Responding to requests for information as the government implements significant changes to the NDIS scheme
- Requesting a letter from the NDIS to confirm the role of social workers in providing functional capacity assessments.

The AASW is committed to ensuring that social workers are recognised and supported in their vital roles within the NDIS.

FUTURE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS

Mental Health Australia held a joint consultation with the Department of Health and Aged Care to gather insights from the Mental Health Australia Members Psychosocial Network about the development of a psychosocial plan. This is the early stage of drafting a plan for future national psychosocial support arrangements. The consultation covered high level principles, characteristics of best practice, system enablers and evaluation and monitoring.

This work will inform the development and funding of psychosocial supports outside of the NDIS, and how these supports will interface with the NDIS. The Psychosocial Project Group is developing the plan, you can find more information about this group here: [Psychosocial Project Group | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#). There will be broader consultation in the future. If you are interested in this work, please click the MyAASW link [here](#).

2024 AUSTRALIAN DIGITAL HEALTH AGENCY (ADHA) ALLIED HEALTH TRANSFORMATION SURVEY

The AASW distributed the survey to members to enquire about their digital health awareness and readiness.

A total of 407 Social Workers completed the survey out of 2,149 allied health professionals. Thank you to those members who contributed to this important survey.

Survey report recommendations include:

- Digital Health education campaign targeting allied health workforce
- My Health Record - expand the type of information allied health can record
- Interoperable digital products fit for purpose to the allied health workforce
- Terminology datasets to enable sharing of allied health clinical information within an interoperable digital ecosystem.

More information about the survey can be found here: [New survey report reveals Allied Health sector ready for digital transformation and urges further policy and funding commitment. – Allied Health Professionals](#)

If you are interested in getting involved in the digital health policy and advocacy work being undertaken, please click the MyAASW link [here](#).

AUSTRALIAN STROKE COALITION

The AASW is a member of the Coalition which brings together representatives from groups and organisations working in the stroke field, such as clinical networks and professional associations/colleges. The focus is to work together on agreed priorities to improve stroke care, reduce duplication amongst groups and strengthen the voice for stroke care at a national and state level. <https://australianstrokecoalition.org.au/members/>

Members are representing the AASW at the Coalition meeting promoting the role of social workers in the stroke field in a public hospital, primary care, NDIS, aged care. The Coalition is focusing on the area of rehabilitation this year.

Interested in providing your input for this work? Click here: <https://my.aasw.asn.au/s/article/Do-you-work-in-the-stroke-field?articleType=Guide>

WA FAMILY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (FDV) WORKFORCE CAPABILITY FRAMEWORK

AASW is liaising with the Department of Communities on the Family and Domestic Violence Workforce Capability Framework which is being developed as part of the WA Government's FDV System Reform Plan.

The Framework aims to build a shared understanding of the capability requirements and expectations needed to drive consistency across the FDV workforce. It focused on workers and organisations in the FDV service system including government agencies, community services, and specialist FDV services. It describes the knowledge, skills and capabilities workers need to provide safe, effective, and appropriate responses to child and adult victim-survivors, and users of violence.

NATIONAL PLAN TO END THE ABUSE AND MISTREATMENT OF OLDER PEOPLE 2024-2034

In late December 2024, the Commonwealth's Attorney General's Department released a draft National Plan with a vision aimed at ending elder abuse and a clear commitment to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan and report publicly on implementation milestones. The National Plan seeks to unite action by governments, the sector and community over the next 10 years, to prevent, respond to and ultimately end the abuse and mistreatment of older people.

The AASW reached out to members drawing on their rich experience and expertise in family violence, child protection, disability and aged care. The AASW made a submission in February 2025 and discussed the similarities and differences between the forms of mistreatment and abuse found in these arenas and the mistreatment of older people. We described the unique contribution that social workers make because we address the systemic and underlying issues that contribute, while we work directly with the older people, their families and the communities in which this mistreatment occurs.

ADVOCACY WITH COMPENSABLE SCHEMES

The AASW meets with stakeholders from several workers' compensation schemes and transport accident schemes to advocate on behalf of social workers and Accredited Mental Health Social Workers. Key issues raised include fee parity with other mental health service providers and recognition of scope of practice and value of service provision within these schemes.

The NSW State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) has advised that they will be undertaking a fee schedule review of the [Psychology and Counselling Fees and Practice Requirements](#) in the second half of 2025. Specific dates have not been provided, however, the Social Policy and Advocacy team will start preparing evidence to support advocacy for increasing fees paid to AMHSWs and recognition of their scope of practice via a standalone fee schedule. If you are interested in contributing to this work, please get in touch with the team, email mhadvocacy@aasw.asn.au

The AASW is dedicated to driving meaningful change through our advocacy efforts, addressing key social issues, and championing the essential role of social work in our communities.

We will continue to keep you informed on our progress in these important advocacy initiatives, and chances to get involved.

The AASW Social Policy and Advocacy team regularly posts opportunities for you to inform our work and provide feedback.

Have your input by checking out the [Have Your Say details in MyAASW](#) via the 'My Benefits' tab.

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Lyra Taylor Fund: 2025 recipients to be announced soon

Upon her passing in 1979, Lyra Taylor bequeathed her estate to the AASW, leading to the establishment of the Lyra Taylor Account, now a sub-fund of the Equity Trustees Charitable Foundation. This fund continues to support social work education and innovation through grants supporting projects that benefit the community.

The Lyra Taylor Committee, dedicated stewards of her legacy, oversees the fund to ensure its ongoing impact. Each year, grants are awarded to Victorian AASW members committed

to enhancing social work practices and outcomes. Previous recipients, including Alison Hocking and Professor Lynette Joubert, have contributed significantly to social work education and research, embodying Lyra Taylor's enduring vision.

The Lyra Taylor Fund plays a crucial role in:

- Advancing professional standards in social work education, research, and practice
- Supporting ongoing professional development to ensure practitioners

remain equipped with the latest knowledge and skills

- Raising awareness of the social work profession through education and advocacy.

The 2025 Lyra Taylor Grant recipients will be announced soon, continuing the tradition of supporting excellence and innovation in social work, as we celebrate the next group of professionals dedicated to making a difference.

Meet The Employer: bridging the gap between graduates and employers

The AASW actively facilitates the transition from academic study to professional practice for social work students and recent graduates, easing the anxiety that often accompanies this period.

The "Meet the Employer" program, one of our flagship initiatives, introduces emerging social workers to various practice fields and connects them directly with potential employers.

A significant highlight of this program was the National Meet the Employer webinar on 27 March 2025. This online event offered participants the opportunity to engage with representatives from prominent organisations such as Services Australia, Headspace, and Relationships Australia. Attendees explored social work roles, career pathways, and job application tips. It also included a panel discussion, which allowed participants

to pose questions and receive personalised advice.

Following the national event, the AASW has organised a series of region-specific sessions throughout May and June 2025. These events are tailored to connect students and graduates with local social work employers across various disciplines.

Join us:

- **Victoria: 6 May**
- **Northern Territory: 13 May**
- **ACT/New South Wales: 15 May**
- **Queensland: 20 May**
- **Western Australia: 22 May**
- **Tasmania: 5 June**
- **South Australia: 11 June**

Each session introduces the participating organisation, explores the daily responsibilities of social workers in these settings, and provides guidance on the application process. Participants can ask questions and connect directly with employer representatives in these interactive Q&A sessions.

Social work students and grads – meet your next employer!



This is your opportunity to **connect with major social work employers in your state or territory.**

Free for AASW members, our Meet the Employer webinars include presentations, a panel discussion and a live Q&A to help you:

- **Get the inside scoop** – engage directly with employers in an informal and relaxed environment
- **Explore career pathways** – learn about different roles and opportunities within the social work sector
- **Have your job application stand out** – get expert advice on how to get shortlisted, including writing a strong resume and cover letter, plus interview tips
- **Hear from experienced industry professionals** – understand what a day in the life of a social worker looks like in different contexts.

Don't leave your job search to trial and error – learn from the experts and set yourself up for success.

Secure your spot for the next event in your state or territory at:
aasw.asn.au/meet-the-employer

Where: Online – no travel required

When: May – June 2025

RENEW BY 31 MAY
TO SAVE WITH EARLY BIRD



MEMBERSHIP POWERS PROGRESS

Together, We Create Change



Renew between 1 – 31 May to stay part of the collective force driving the profession forward. Your membership supports advocacy, professional recognition, and resources that empower social workers to create real change.

Renew

Not a member yet? Head to the [AASW website](#) to find out more.

Chart your professional growth with confidence: through self-assessment

As you navigate your career in social work, it's important to reflect on your current phase and future aspirations. Do you have a particular focus within social work that drives your passion? Are there areas of practice that intrigue or challenge you, pushing you to learn more? Consider whether you are in a phase of refining your existing skills or if you're looking to develop new ones. Understanding your professional direction will help you make the most of the My AASW Social Work Capability Compass.

DISCOVER YOUR PROFESSIONAL STRENGTHS

The Capability Compass offers a comprehensive self-assessment tailored specifically for social workers. Choose from 13 specialised capabilities to evaluate your strengths and pinpoint areas for growth. By selecting capabilities aligned with your practice and career objectives, you gain a clear understanding of your proficiency levels in each.

Using this tool, you can take charge of your career planning with clear, achievable goals that guide your professional trajectory. It also enhances your professional recognition, demonstrating your commitment to continuous learning and development. With the Capability Compass, you have a powerful resource to illuminate your path forward, ensuring every step you take aligns with your aspirations and long-term success in social work.

WHY USE THE CAPABILITY COMPASS?

The Capability Compass is designed to support your professional growth in a structured and meaningful way. It allows you to assess your current skills, providing valuable insights into your strengths across key areas of social work practice. Through a tailored approach, you receive personalised recommendations that align with your development needs, helping you to expand your expertise.

For more information and to access the self-assessment tool, [click here](#)

Discover more today and embark on a journey of empowered learning and development in social work.

Take charge of your career planning with clear, achievable goals that guide your professional trajectory

What do you want to assess today?



Relationships

- ☒ Capability 1: Engagement
☐ Capability 2: Connection and Collaboration

Social Justice

- ☐ Capability 3: Practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
☐ Capability 4: Practice with diversity
☒ Capability 5: Advocacy
☐ Capability 6: Systems thinking

Evidence-based practice

- ☐ Capability 7: Assessment
☐ Capability 8: Implementation
☐ Capability 9: Evaluation
☐ Capability 10: Research-practice mindset

Professionalism and Growth

- ☒ Capability 11: Ethical decision making
☐ Capability 12: Lifelong learning and leadership
☐ Capability 13: Workload Management

Capability 1: Engagement

Social workers strive to build positive working relationships with individuals, families, organisations and communities through demonstrating self awareness, empathy, interpersonal sensitivity, active listening, and by adapting their communication based on whom they interact with. They use a range of theoretical approaches (e.g. human rights, trauma-informed) to support how they engage with others. They quickly establish rapport and trust when forming relationships and adapt their style to the individuals they work with. Social workers display the following capability indicators related to Engagement. They:

Emerging

Use empathy, reflection, active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication and interpersonal skills to engage effectively with people and clearly communicate services provided.

Proficient? *

☒ Yes

Demonstrate an awareness of the risks, benefits and ethical considerations of using different communication tools to engage with people and deliver services (e.g. online).

Proficient? *

☒ Yes

Demonstrate an awareness of context (i.e. family, language, values, relationship and culture factors when working with individuals, families and involuntary service users), acknowledge the different power dynamics or politics in communities and organisations, and, where possible, equalise power through transparency.

Proficient? *

☒ Yes

Evolving

Critically reflect on the interpersonal skills and communication tools used and identify opportunities to adapt approach.

Proficient?

☒ Yes

Are able to utilise and navigate different communication tools to engage with people and deliver services.

Proficient? *

☒ Yes

Quickly establish rapport, trust and mutual understanding when forming relationships.

Proficient?

☒ Yes

Established

Use a range of interpersonal skills and communication techniques to engage respectfully with others (e.g. mediation, negotiation, conflict management).

Proficient?

☐ Yes

Critically evaluate the efficacy of using technology to communicate with people and deliver services.

Proficient?

☒ Yes

Adapt their style to respond respectfully yet assertively when navigating complex relationships with individuals, families, communities and organisations.

Proficient?

☐ Yes

Expert

Champion progressive, efficient and effective methods of communicating with people and delivering services (e.g. online).

Proficient?

☐ Yes

< Back

Next >

Save

Your Results

The results below indicate an overall proficiency level for each of the capabilities that you have selected. This profile is designed to help you identify what are your strengths and areas for improvement.

Your strengths motivate and engage you and therefore, it is important to commit to continuously building upon your strengths as part of your practice.

Your areas for improvement are capability gaps which can be improved upon with further professional development. In cases where you have identified several areas for improvement, select a few to focus your professional development efforts on.

If no proficiencies were listed for a capability, then no results are shown.

Capability	Emerging	Evolving	Established	Expert
Engagement				
Advocacy				
Ethical decision making				

< Back

Next >

Save

FEATURE ARTICLES

South Australia's social work registration: a case study in complexity

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) has consistently advocated for a national registration scheme to establish consistency, accountability, and formal recognition for the profession. The introduction of mandatory social work registration in South Australia marks progress in this direction, offering professional regulation while also underscoring the complexities that arise when different jurisdictions implement their own legislation and frameworks. The fragmented nature of oversight across states presents challenges for social workers, employers, and the public, reinforcing the need for a unified national system.

For social workers in South Australia, mandatory registration from 1 July 2026 represents a major shift—one that will improve public protection and enhance professional capabilities. It also highlights the intricate nature of professional oversight, both within the state and across the country. As demand for social workers continues to rise, particularly in mental health settings, veteran support services, hospitals, and community organisations, the introduction of a regulatory body is timely. Registration is not a singular solution, it forms part of a broader mosaic of professional governance.

A COMPLEX LANDSCAPE OF OVERSIGHT

From 1 July 2025 social workers will be able to register to the newly established South Australia Social Worker Registration Board (SWRB). From 1 July 2026 they will be accountable to the SWRB when registration becomes mandatory.

Registration with the SWRB is not the sole requirement. AASW members will continue to adhere to standards set by the AASW, including the Code of Ethics and Practice Standards. The AASW will continue to set principles and criteria for accrediting social work education in Australia, ensuring graduates meet professional standards for membership to the AASW.

Those employed within the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) sector will remain subject to the **NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission**, ensuring compliance with sector-specific screening, training, and reporting obligations. Many social workers are employed in health services, aged care, and child protection, necessitating adherence to additional regulations enforced by bodies such as the **South Australian Department for Child Protection (DCP)** and the **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission**. Although social work does not currently fall under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra), many

health and hospital employers impose comparable continuing professional development (CPD) and mandatory reporting requirements.

In addition, social workers providing services to veterans and their families must comply with regulatory frameworks set by the **Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA)** and **Open Arms - Veterans & Families Counselling**. Open Arms, a government-funded initiative originally founded by Vietnam veterans, operates under strict clinical governance structures to ensure high-quality, evidence-based mental health care for Australian Defence Force personnel and their families. Social workers in this sector must meet professional accreditation requirements, uphold

ethical standards, and engage in ongoing professional development. They must also demonstrate expertise in trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, and military-specific mental health challenges.

THE ROLE OF REGISTRATION IN A BROADER SYSTEM

Ahpra states:

"We want the public to have trust and confidence in regulated health practitioners."

"We only register people who have the skills and qualifications to provide competent and ethical care. Registered health practitioners must confirm each year that they meet the standards for registration." - [Ahpra website](#)

Ahpra explains the purpose of this is to safeguard the public, to ensure compliance and monitor those whose registration has been suspended or cancelled to prevent unauthorised practice.

Governments, educators, professional bodies, and advocacy groups recognise that professional regulation is essential in complex service systems where the stakes are high and public trust is paramount. In sectors like health, aged care, and disability services, regulation serves as a social agreement: the public entrusts practitioners with people who live with vulnerabilities, and in return, practitioners are held to transparent, enforceable standards. Regulation puts clear safeguards around risk,





and provides assurance that those delivering services are qualified, and deliver services ethically and with accountability.

It is within this broader framework of public protection and systemic coordination that national social work regulation will align the profession with contemporary standards of care and public expectation.

A key benefit of registration is the obligation to maintain an ongoing program of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and remain up to date with contemporary practice. This will help to hone practitioners' skills in areas like assessing risk, therapeutic interventions, the latest evidence-based practice and other innovations in their field of practice. Mandatory CPD requirements will support practitioners to carve out the time and resources to invest in improved practice, which can be challenging for those with busy roles and high caseloads.

For employers, the transition to a registration system presents both opportunities and challenges. Many organisations currently require eligibility for AASW membership as the industry standard and evidence of a social work qualification. Registration will clarify professional responsibilities for individual practitioners and strengthen ethical accountability.

A STEP FORWARD, BUT NOT THE FINAL DESTINATION

Despite the complexities, registration offers substantial benefits. The SWRB will establish a standardised regulatory framework, simplifying the enforcement of professional standards. This will build public trust, as clients and employers will have a clear mechanism for reporting misconduct and ensuring practitioner accountability.

From an employment perspective, registration streamlines the verification of qualifications, ensuring that all social workers meet established competency standards. This could reduce the burden on individual organisations to set their own accreditation requirements and instead enable them to rely on a central authority to confirm practitioners' professional suitability.

LOOKING AHEAD

The South Australian Social Worker Registration Board (SWRB) has emphasised that its role is to regulate the social work profession in South Australia to ensure the delivery of safe, ethical, and competent services.

The SWRB states that its establishment "marks a significant milestone in the protection of vulnerable individuals and communities through professional regulation." Importantly, the Board acknowledges the complexities of the broader regulatory environment and

clarifies that its work does not replace or override existing standards set by professional bodies such as the AASW.

In the immediate term, social workers and employers will need to navigate the administrative adjustments that registration entails. There will inevitably be transitional challenges as practitioners adapt to the new system, particularly in understanding how the SWRB registration scheme interacts with existing AASW membership and other regulatory obligations.

Registration will introduce new responsibilities but also new opportunities, ensuring that those dedicated to supporting others are more formally recognised for their expertise and ethical practice.

The AASW remains committed to advocating for national registration as the most effective means of safeguarding the public and strengthening professional standards. South Australia's registration scheme represents meaningful progress, but it is only one component of a more comprehensive solution. The ultimate objective is a unified system that delivers clarity, consistency, and fairness for all social workers across Australia. By continuing to advocate for a national framework, the AASW seeks to ensure that every social worker, regardless of their location, is both recognised for their skills and held to the highest professional standards.

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**Queensland
Government**

Social worker registration in South Australia:

upcoming changes and available support

From 1 July 2025, social workers in South Australia will be able to register, aligning the profession with other regulated fields such as medicine, nursing, and psychology. This marks a significant shift for the sector, bringing new compliance requirements and professional standards.

To support social workers through this transition, the AASW offers a range of training opportunities. These Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses and resources provide guidance on key areas relevant to registration:

- Putting Theory into Practice - Risk Assessment & Case Formulation**
 This course covers essential risk assessment and case formulation principles, helping social workers navigate professional responsibilities and ethical considerations.
[Find out more](#)
- Introduction to Best Practice for Supervision**
 Registration introduces new supervision requirements. This course outlines best practices to ensure compliance and professional development.
[Find out more](#)

- Models and Theories of Supervision**

Designed for both supervisors and supervisees, this course explores key models and frameworks to enhance the supervision process

[Find out more](#)

- Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and Communities**

This course provides knowledge and skills to support culturally responsive practice when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities.

[Find out more](#)

While registration introduces additional administrative requirements, it also establishes clear professional standards and protections for both practitioners and clients. With the right preparation and training, social workers in South Australia can navigate these changes effectively.

National Registration



2025 is our year to push for national registration for social workers

Don't miss our **free live webinar** on 14 May 2025 to hear how the AASW is advocating for inclusion of social work in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS), the scheme for Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) registered health professionals in Australia.

Speakers:



Cindy Smith, AASW CEO, will share the campaign efforts and actions we're taking to progress national registration for the social work profession



Dominic Szeker, AASW Senior Policy Advisor, will provide an overview of NRAS and what national registration would look like.



Jim Arneman ASM, Intensive Care Paramedic and Duty Officer (Operations) with the ACT Ambulance Service, will provide his insightful perspective on the paramedic journey to national registration in 2017.

You'll learn about:

- the critical importance of national registration
- the AASW's campaign efforts and strategic actions being taken
- why the next six months are a crucial window to advocate for national registration
- how you can get involved and make a difference.

Date: Wednesday 14 May 2025

Time: 6:00pm AEST

Claim 1 CPD hour by joining us for this free webinar.

Highlights of the International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health (ICSWHMW)

The 10th International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health (19-22 November 2024) was a great success, bringing together over 1,000 delegates from around the world. Hosted by the AASW, the conference fostered global connections among social workers, academics, researchers, and students, all committed to social justice, human rights, and advancing social work practice.

Impactful sessions included:

National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) – The Changing Landscape for Social Work and the Untapped Potential, presented by Dr Brooke Kooymans, highlighted the critical role social workers play within the NDIS.

Diagnosing Resilience Across Cultures and Contexts, delivered by Dr Michael Ungar, powerfully illustrated the ways in which resilience is shaped by social and environmental factors.

The annual Norma Parker Address, delivered by AASW President Julianne Whyte AOM and Professor Sue Green explored the state of the profession, the challenges on the horizon, and the essential contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In his keynote, Professor Tom Calma AO discussed the diversity of Australia's Indigenous population and geography, highlighting how systemic bias, the impacts of the Stolen Generation, and disproportionately high suicide rates continue to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while emphasising the need for targeted health programs to address these challenges.

Slaying the Foundation: Building Capacity and Promoting LGBTQIA+ Safe and Inclusive Care in a Major Australian Trauma Hospital was presented by Mx Tegan Murnane and Mx Connor Gryffydd. They highlighted the critical importance of lived-experience roles in driving inclusive, culturally safe health services for the LGBTQIA+ community.

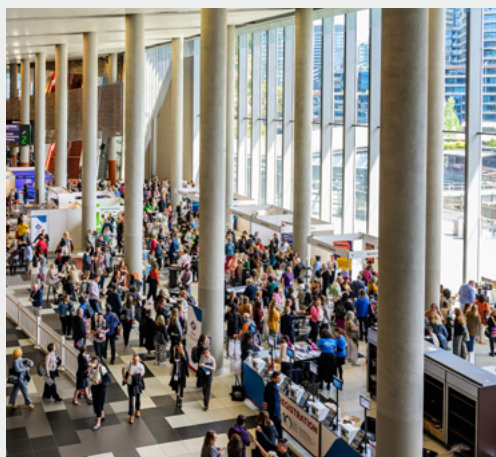
Standing in the Winds of Systemic Discrimination, the keynote delivered by Dr Cindy Blackstock, laid bare the structural inequalities experienced by First Nations communities in Canada, particularly the persistent bureaucratic barriers denying Indigenous children access to essential services. Dr Blackstock urged social workers to confront systemic discrimination with urgency.

As the conference ended, it was clear that every session left a lasting impression—challenging perspectives, sparking discussions and reflection, and reigniting passion for the profession.



Professor Tom Calma AO





1100
delegates



25
countries



91%

of attendees agreed or strongly agreed that they learned or took something positive from speakers



18
exhibitors
& sponsors



591
abstracts received



4 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
social worker sponsorship recipients

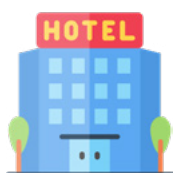
22
attendees
from China



23
attendees from
Singapore



25
attendees
from Taiwan



293
nights of
accommodation
booked



34
AASW staff helped
run each day



47%
of attendees are
AASW members



1100
digital badges issued
for attendance





Navigating professional challenges:

the essential role of supervision for social workers

All AASW members are required to engage in professional supervision as part of maintaining high standards in practice. Social workers are required to have regular supervision to adhere to the AASW Practice Standards.

Supervision offers essential guidance, ethical oversight, and decision-making support, helping social workers manage complex professional demands. Ensuring you maintain regular supervision can help prevent workplace challenges from escalating. It's a critical safeguard that every practitioner should prioritise, as demonstrated by member Jonathan Scomparin's* experience.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF LETTING SUPERVISION LAPSE

Jonathan, a private practice social worker, let his supervision lapse as he figured he had never had a problem with his social work practice and the cost of supervision was a burden he thought he could do without.

Jonathan was working long hours across the week, and he saw people with very complex circumstances. He had been working this way for a few years and it was starting to take a toll. An ethical complaint was later made against him, relating to potential boundary violations and breaches of professional conduct, leading to a formal ethics investigation by the AASW.



Jonathan had been working with complex clients over a long period of time and lacked the external guidance needed to manage ethical dilemmas, vicarious trauma, and unconscious biases. Without a supervisor to help him navigate difficult situations, he made decisions that, in hindsight, he realised were not aligned with best practice. Jonathan's ability to navigate the challenges would have been different had he maintained regular

supervision with an accredited social work supervisor.

"The cost of supervision felt like an unnecessary expense at the time," Jonathan recalls. "But looking back, I can see how essential it is. My supervisor would have helped me reflect on my decisions, with my day-to-day work and identifying the vicarious trauma I was experiencing,

ensuring I remained ethically grounded and practising safely.”

Jonathan’s experience underscores the importance of receiving social work supervision with an Accredited Social Work Supervisor. An Accredited Social Work Supervisor not only provides professional support but can also act as a safeguard against harmful practice, and costly mistakes that can damage careers and reputations.

Becoming an AASW Accredited Social Work Supervisor is significant for professionals aiming to advance their careers and share their insights with fellow social workers. Accreditation underscores a commitment to excellence in ethical supervision, enhancing credibility and unlocking opportunities for advanced practice. Supervision is increasingly critical in light of its recurrent appearance in coroner reports, in which coroners have highlighted the urgent need for supervision to be embedded into social work practice. Supervision skills were informally acquired in the past, but it’s now evident that formal training is essential. The AASW developed an Advanced Supervision Training program.

Supervision isn’t just about maintaining ethical practice—it’s vital for both practitioners and clients. It’s essential to seek supervision from an Accredited Social Work Supervisor, because credentialled supervisors have completed rigorous training, demonstrated advanced supervision capabilities—such as reflective practice and theoretical frameworks—and met strict eligibility criteria, including holding an AASW-accredited qualification and possessing at least two years’ full-time equivalent post-qualification experience in a supervisory role within the past five years.

Choosing an Accredited Social Work Supervisor means you’re working with someone who has been formally assessed as capable of providing high-quality, ethical supervision that supports your professional growth and protecting those you work with.

Supervision is essential—not only to maintain ethical practice but also to protect clients from harm.

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR SUPERVISION

Supervision is a formal requirement in social work practice, as per section 8 of the AASW Practice Standards:

- Accredited Mental Health Social Worker (AMHSW): Supervision is a mandatory component of accreditation
- AASW-accredited social work degrees: Students must undertake supervised placements as part of their qualification
- General AASW membership and CPD requirements: to maintain professional standards
- Accredited Aged Care Social Workers: Supervision is required as part of accreditation.

WHY SUPERVISION MATTERS

Supervision ensures that social workers:

- practice safely
- engage in reflective practice to improve decision-making
- prevent vicarious trauma by discussing complex interactions in a structured way
- disclose ethical concerns in a safe space
- receive guidance on unconscious biases, such as class or racial bias, that can impact client interactions
- are supported in high-risk therapeutic interventions where poor practice can have severe consequences.

Many social workers have both a line manager and a practice supervisor to ensure comprehensive oversight. Private practitioners should arrange their own supervision, ensuring they continue to practice in accordance with the AASW Code of Ethics and supporting their professional development.

ADVANCED SUPERVISION FOR COMPLEX PRACTICE

Recognising the gaps in comprehensive supervision, the AASW developed the Advanced Supervision Program to support experienced social workers with people experiencing complex circumstances.

[Click here](#) to explore our programs and workshops.

DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOU –PRIORITISE SUPERVISION

Just as insurance protects against financial loss, supervision protects your career, ethical standing, and emotional wellbeing. Don’t be the person who learns this lesson the hard way.

The AASW’s Find a Social Worker tool can help you connect with an Accredited Social Work Supervisor suited to your needs.

Visit www.aasw.asn.au/find-a-social-worker to secure the supervision support you need today.

** Name changed*



Leading social workers?

Here's how to lead well

Managing social workers isn't just about policies and paperwork—it's about building a culture of trust, ethical leadership, and resilience.

Whether you're stepping into a leadership role for the first time or looking to sharpen your skills, the AASW's On Demand Learning is here to help. These courses tackle the real-world challenges of supervision, navigating legal and ethical grey areas, and fostering professional growth in a complex, high-stakes environment.



- **AASW Recording | Ethical Leadership in Social Work: Responding to the Call for Child Safe Cultures**

This 1-hour session focuses on promoting ethical leadership within social work, emphasising the development of child-safe organisational cultures.

Rated ★★★★★ 4.4/5 by participants

[Find out more](#)

- **AASW Panel Recording | Navigating Supervision Excellence**

This 1.25-hour panel discussion explores best practices and challenges in providing effective supervision in social work contexts.

Rated ★★★★★ 4.1/5 by participants

[Find out more](#)

- **AASW Webinar Recording | Planning Effective Support for Clients Involved in Legal Proceedings**

This 1.5-hour webinar offers strategies for social workers to effectively support clients navigating legal processes.

Rated ★★★★★ 4/5 by participants

[Find out more](#)

- **AASW Webinar Recording | Solution-Focused Self-Care Strategies for Social Workers**

A 1-hour session providing practical self-care techniques tailored for social work professionals to maintain wellbeing and resilience.

Rated ★★★★★ 4.4/5 by participants

[Find out more](#)

- **Creating Psychological Safety in Child Protection Supervision**

A 1.5-hour session focused on establishing and maintaining psychological safety in supervisory practices within child protection work.

Rated ★★★★★ 4/5 by participants

[Find out more](#)



Lead with confidence Support with purpose

Get recognised as an AASW Accredited Supervisor



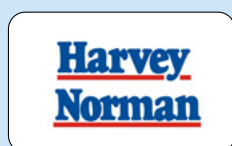
Great supervision changes lives. The Supervisor Credential is your chance to show you've got the skills to guide, support and grow the next generation of social workers.

With this credential you will:

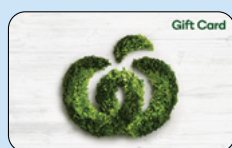
- build strong, ethical relationships
- support supervisees to thrive
- build trust
- use proven frameworks and reflective practice
- contribute to better outcomes, for clients and the profession.

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on retail & online shopping



Up to 10% discount
on gift cards



Up to 50% discount
on travel & accommodation

... and many more!

Raising the bar:

how AASW credentials elevate social work

For social workers, expertise isn't just about what you know—it's about how you apply it in the real world. The AASW understands this, which is why it offers a suite of credentials that formally recognise skills in key practice areas. But these aren't just certificates to hang on the wall. They're career game-changers.

WHY CREDENTIALS MATTER

In today's professional landscape, employers and clients are looking for more than just a degree. They want assurance that a social worker has the specialised knowledge and skills to work with people experiencing complex circumstances with confidence. That's where AASW credentials come in. Covering areas like mental health, child protection, and social work supervision, these credentials provide formal recognition of a social worker's expertise—something that can open doors, increase job security, and even lead to higher pay.

REAL BENEFITS FOR REAL SOCIAL WORKERS

Take Sarah*. A social worker with years of experience in family violence, she found that despite her expertise, she was often competing with other professionals who lacked social work-specific training. After earning her Family Violence credential, she not only gained recognition for her skills but also secured a leadership role where she now mentors others in the field.

Or consider Michael*, a seasoned practitioner in mental health who wanted to work under Medicare. By obtaining the Mental Health credential, he gained eligibility to deliver services under the Better Access initiative—giving him more career flexibility and expanding his impact on the community.

For Fatima*, an experienced school social worker, the School credential helped her move into a policy

role, where she now advocates for better mental health support for students nationwide.

MORE THAN A POST NOMINAL – A COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE

Beyond the career benefits, AASW credentials reinforce the professional standards that define quality social work. Credentialed members complete ongoing professional development and receive digital badges, allowing them to showcase their achievements online. It's a way of saying, "I've done the work, and I'm committed to staying at the top of my game."

Whether you're looking to advance your career, strengthen your expertise, or gain formal recognition for the skills you've already mastered, AASW credentials provide a clear path forward.

Ready to take the next step? Learn more at [AASW Credentials Overview](#)

**Names have been changed.*



Professional news & views

YOUR VOTE COUNTS: STRENGTHENING REPRESENTATION ON THE AASW BOARD

The AASW Board is proposing a constitutional amendment to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation by replacing the current combined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Director position with two distinct roles: one for an Aboriginal social work member and one for a Torres Strait Islander social work member. This change reflects the unique cultural identities and aspirations of each group and aims to ensure both are equally represented within AASW governance. Members will be invited to participate in a second consultation phase from 26 May to 16 June 2025, with feedback due 5:00pm AEST on 16 June 2025.

[Read more](#)

OVERHAUL OF PATIENT CARE REVIEWS FOLLOWING TRAGIC DEATH

The New South Wales government has committed to overhauling patient care review processes after the death of two-year-old Joe Massa, who suffered brain damage due to delayed treatment at Northern Beaches Hospital. The proposed "Joe's Rule" aims to empower parents to advocate more effectively for their children's healthcare, ensuring timely and appropriate medical responses.

[Read more](#)

EXPANSION OF SOCIAL SERVICES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Public libraries across Australia are increasingly serving as safe havens for vulnerable people. In response to growing community needs, some libraries have begun hiring social workers to assist patrons facing various challenges, including homelessness and mental health issues. This initiative reflects a broader trend of integrating social services into community spaces to provide accessible support.

[Read more](#)

HEALTH INSURANCE PREMIUM INCREASE

As of April 1, 2025, private health insurance premiums in Australia rose by an average of 3.73%. This increase, the largest in seven years, impacts nearly 15 million Australians and has sparked discussions about the affordability of private health coverage. Minister for Health and Aged Care, Mark Butler, intervened to moderate the proposed hikes, but concerns remain about the financial strain on households.

[Read more](#)

EXPANSION OF NDIS FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

As of December 2024, the investigation into NDIS fraud has expanded to 120 active cases, indicating significant issues within the agency.

[Read more](#)



NDIS LEGISLATIVE REFORMS

On 22 August 2024, the Australian Parliament passed the National Disability Insurance Scheme Amendment (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) Bill 2024. This legislation aims to realign the NDIS with its original purpose, ensuring improved outcomes for individuals with permanent and significant disabilities.

[Read more](#)

NEW CEO APPOINTMENT

Ahpra has appointed Justin Untersteiner as its new Chief Executive Officer. This leadership change is expected to influence the agency's strategic direction and regulatory practices.

[Read more](#)



Member spotlight: Dr Bronwyn Herbert

Dr Bronwyn Herbert graduated from the University of Queensland with a PhD thesis on the generational impacts of homelessness in 2024, at the age of 90. Dr Herbert's dedication to understanding homelessness has impacted lives across Australia. With a sixty-year career in social work, even after 'retiring' at 81, Dr Herbert continues to work towards improving our community – a true inspiration.

Notably, one of her supervisors was the late Prof Jill Wilson, another dedicated AASW member.

Dr Bronwyn Herbert was awarded Queensland Senior Australian of the Year for 2025.



Board member spotlight: Dr Brooke Kooymans

Dr Brooke Kooymans has been a Director on the Board of the AASW since October 2018. Within the AASW, she has held positions such as Chair of the National Ethics Committee, member of the People and Culture Committee, and was National Vice President from November 2023 – November 2024

A seasoned social worker with over 24 years of experience in government and non-government sectors, she is the founder and Director of Rehability Australia, a Brisbane-based private practice dedicated to serving the disability community, focusing on acquired disabilities, mental health, and dual diagnoses.

Dr Kooymans holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology and Sociology, a

Bachelor of Social Work, a Master of Social Work, and a Graduate Certificate in Rehabilitation Case Management. She is also an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker, an Accredited Disability Social Worker, and a Certified Practicing Case Manager. Her commitment to professional development is further exemplified by her pursuit of a PhD focusing on "Social Work in Practice in the Community Sector."

Dr Kooymans has presented at local and national conferences on topics related to acquired disability management, social work, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), and serves as a professional supervisor and university guest lecturer. Her active involvement in professional organisations underscore her commitment to advancing the field of social work in Australia.

Unlocking the brain's potential:

the role of neuroplasticity in social work practice

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) has introduced an on-demand course titled “Neuroplasticity and Neurophysiology in Social Work,” designed to deepen social workers’ understanding of the brain’s adaptability, especially in the context of trauma.

Based on member feedback, we developed a highly interactive and engaging on-demand course using contemporary learning design elements such as animation, podcast style sound bites, interactive images, knowledge checks and interactive reflective exercises.

This course examines how trauma can alter brain structures and functions, as evidenced by imaging techniques. It provides evidence-based strategies to promote positive neural changes and manage client stress responses. The course is led by Sunelle Asmussen, a Clinical Social Worker and internationally recognised Neurofeedback Practitioner with over 20 years of experience.

Some comments from participants:

“This training offers a very comprehensive introduction to the subject of Neuroplasticity and Neurophysiology and is relevant to most types of Social Work practice. Lots of resources have been included for those who would like further information. Highly recommended training!”

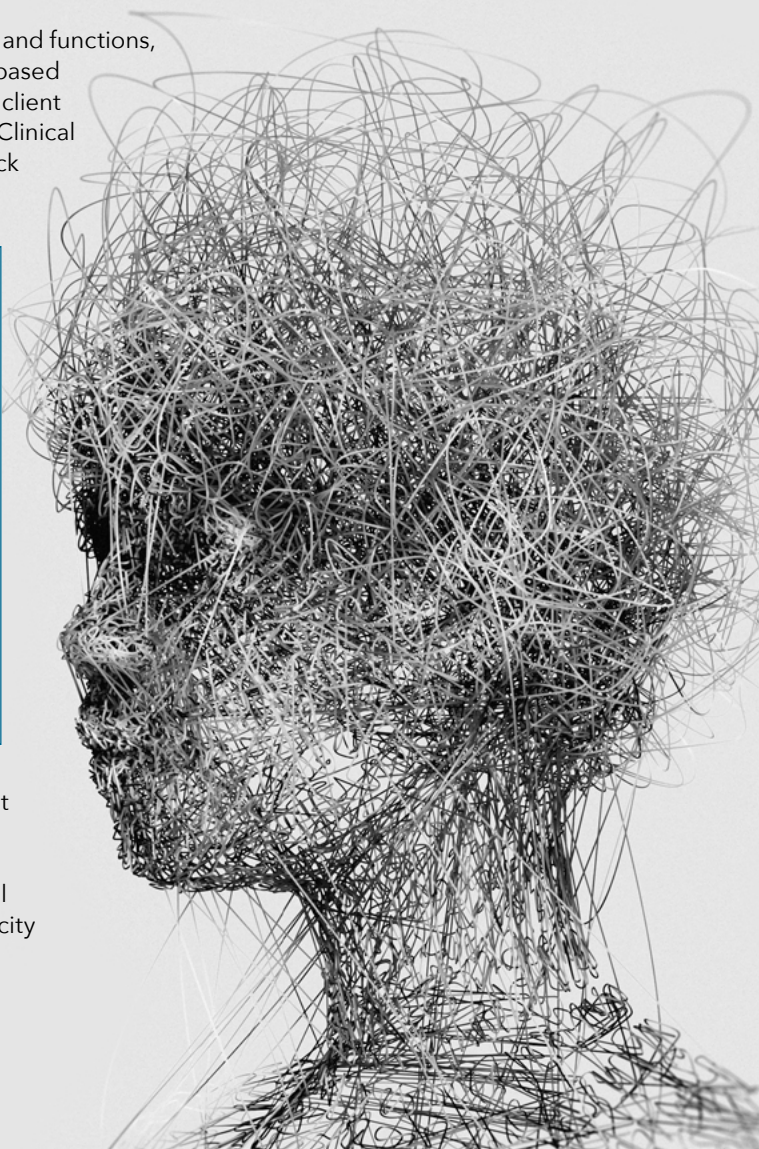
“I found this course incredible! So informative that I just wanted to keep going and learning more.

This was an informative and interesting course! I especially loved the ongoing message of hope and optimism by Sunelle regarding the amazing ability for the brain to change and heal!”

The AASW’s commitment to providing high-quality, relevant professional development opportunities is well-recognised within the social work community. Participants can expect a comprehensive learning experience that bridges theoretical knowledge with practical application, enhancing their capacity to support clients effectively.

Rated ★★★★★ 4.5/5 by participants

Discover more or register [here](#)





Journey of the leaves: the personal story behind culturally respectful care at Forensic Medicine Newcastle, Australia

JODY JESSOP

As a Kamilaroi/Walan Aboriginal woman I have always had a personal connection to the importance of nature as a part of Sorry Business. Nature is symbolically expressed in Sorry Business for Aboriginal people through the many ways we conduct ceremonies to honour those who have died. Some past customs included placing the person in a tree or wrapping them in bark.

When I joined Forensic Medicine in Newcastle, as a Social Worker in 2020, I noticed the Social Work team already had a strong commitment to incorporating nature and Aboriginal ceremonies into their work supporting First Nations families through the coronial process and had established processes to facilitate smoking ceremonies.

I vividly remember early on as a Social Worker in the department walking into the mortuary and seeing a large branch of gum leaves placed on top of a First Nations man who sadly was in our care. I was really touched by this act of someone placing gum leaves with a person and I asked my colleagues about it. Danny (Social Worker) had been talking to this man's family on the phone and learnt that this man loved nature and had a

strong connection to the bush. Danny spoke to the family about the beautiful bushland surrounding our specialist facility, on Awabakal Country, where the man had been transferred to for his postmortem examination for the coroner. As the family were unable to travel to Newcastle to be with him, Danny suggested that he could collect some gum leaves and place them with the man during his time at Forensic Medicine and to stay with him on his trip back to Country. The family spoke about their gratitude for "keeping him safe" while he was away from family and off Country.

This conversation generated more discussions in our Social Work team about how we could provide an increase in and more intentional culturally safe care to First Nations families, especially those who find

themselves in our service and the Coronial system. The team already had a foundation to supporting First Nations families through our Social Work model of proactive bereavement care, focused on empowerment, advocacy, cultural competency, respect for all persons, and a culturally safe space through visible artwork, maps and flags prominently displayed, and Indigenous-designed quilts for when people come to Forensic Medicine to spend time with their person. I want to acknowledge our late 'sister' and colleague in NSW Pathology (an organisation that Forensic Medicine is part of), Angela Pearce, and Auntie Joy Reid, for their drive and support with these initiatives.

Joining the team as an identified Aboriginal Social Worker and bringing my cultural knowledge and connection with the Aboriginal community, I shared with the team that my Auntie Louise had started painting gum leaves and that she had made a beautiful wreath of the leaves to display in her home. Initially, the Social Work team and I thought we should ask Auntie Louise to make a wreath of painted gum leaves to display in the family viewing room at Forensic Medicine Newcastle. I was then talking to my mum, 'Auntie' Jill, who had just started attending an art group Create and Connect, run by Relationships Australia at Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre in Lake Macquarie NSW (Awabakal Country). Thinking about the wreath, we were wondering about the possibility of the group painting gum leaves as a part of Sorry Business to share with Forensic Medicine in our work supporting families through the Coronial process. So, they did this and gave individually painted gum leaves to our team to offer families so that they can, if they wish, choose and place leaves with their person who has passed on.

The painted gum leaves are seen as an evolution of some of the traditional customs for today. The leaves symbolise: ongoing connection (some leaves stay with the person and others are kept by the family); our mobs looking after each other; cultural respect and care for each person on Awabakal Country (in the care of Forensic Medicine); and keeping the deceased person safe on their journey. The members of Nikinpa Art Group

have told us they feel honoured to be able to support families in a culturally meaningful and deeply personal way. Auntie Brenda attends the art group weekly and has said that the leaves have helped build connections in her community:

"It just gives you that good feeling just to come in and sit down, just to paint leaves and get your mind going."

Others have said that:

"The group is a safe place for the women, it's just been amazing to see how the women have grown. It's given them a purpose."

"It's a chance to create something that makes a difference in the lives of others."

We now have a basket of these leaves placed in the family and viewing rooms at Forensic Medicine Newcastle for all families who are coming to spend time together with their relative or friend.



All families are invited to place leaves with their person who is in our care and take a leaf or leaves with them. For all families who live outside of our regional area and where their person needs to travel to Forensic Medicine in Newcastle, the Social Worker will have conversations about the leaves as part of providing personalised and culturally safe care. We ask questions to get to know their family member or friend better which helps us in picking the right leaf or leaves for them. First Nations families have spoken to us about the comfort this has provided to them knowing that their person is safe and being cared for during their time at Forensic Medicine.

One member of the Art group, sadly, had a family member come into our care. This is what she wrote:

"This week I had to attend Forensic Medicine for my personal goodbye and was humbled by the way the team treated us and were greeted by a basket of beautiful leaves. To say how much this touched my heart, there are no words to describe the peace I felt and the ripple effect of what the significance of this practice has on families in a time of loss and now I've seen it firsthand."

The Art group has since formed connections with local high and primary schools. They have run workshops for students, painting leaves together and explaining the story behind the leaves, how they are used at Forensic Medicine Newcastle and how they can be a part of Sorry Business to provide support for First Nations families in the community. Leaves painted by Aboriginal students which

are placed with others who have passed on is particularly meaningful for some First Nations families where their children have come into our care. It has provided comfort knowing that there are young people in the community caring for their own. As one parent put it, "Your mob is looking after our mob".

Members of the Art group are pleased that non-Indigenous families

connected with Forensic Medicine Newcastle have also used the leaves to find comfort in their grief. This contributes to mutual respect and genuine reconciliation. Not only do we continue to receive these beautiful leaves, but we have also been gifted, and commissioned, some culturally designed quilts that are used in viewings for our families to comfort, prepare and honour the deceased and their families.

The Forensic Medicine Social Work team in Newcastle have worked hard to share what we have been doing. We are delighted that other services around the country have picked up this idea to foster more culturally respectful practices. As Uncle Archie Roach says, "From little things big things grow..."

AASW partners with NSW Health for advanced training

The AASW is proud to announce we have established a collaborative partnership with the New South Wales (NSW) Ministry of Health to enhance the professional development of social workers across the state.

This alliance focuses on delivering specialised training programs designed to equip social workers with advanced skills and knowledge, elevating public safety within NSW.

ADVANCED SUPERVISION PROGRAM

One of the cornerstone initiatives of this partnership is the Advanced Supervision Program. This comprehensive 8-week program combines self-paced eLearning modules with interactive online workshops, facilitator-led masterclasses, and collaborative coaching circles. Spanning a total of 20 hours, the program is meticulously structured to provide an in-depth understanding of effective supervision practices in social work. Participants engage in a blend of autonomous learning and guided sessions, fostering theoretical knowledge and practical application.

INTRODUCTION TO BEST PRACTICE FOR SUPERVISION WORKSHOP

In addition to the Advanced Supervision Program, the partnership offers the "Introduction to Best Practice for Supervision" workshop. This virtual workshop, conducted over two half-day sessions, is designed to equip social workers with contemporary knowledge, practical tools, and essential skills necessary for effective supervision. It aims to build confidence and competence among supervisors in the social work field.

Here is some feedback from people who have completed the courses:

"This training was extremely beneficial for myself to help lead my team and offer the best possible supervision that I can."

"Participating in this training has been an eye-opening experience. Attending the supervision training has significantly enhanced my understanding of effective supervisory practices."

"The presenters were very good. knowledgeable, engaging, and helpful."

"The training helped me understand how my sense of professional identity will keep changing as I embark on a journey as a social worker, and it will be a career-long endeavour of creating and recreating my professional identity."

There are two other programs being run for this partnership including Facilitating Group Supervision as well as access to the Core Skills Modules. Through this strategic partnership, the AASW and the NSW Ministry of Health are committed to ensuring that social workers have access to relevant, high-quality training and educational resources. This collaboration not only enhances the professional capabilities of individual practitioners but also contributes to the overall improvement of social work services within the community.

Want to complete this training yourself? [Find out more](#)

Effective supervision in social work: skills for support and leadership

AASW has responded to numerous coroner reports and community needs which highlight that supervision by experienced social workers is essential for maintaining ethical and effective practice. Up-to-date supervision training is vital for social workers to ensure they provide ethical, effective, and evidence-based support to clients while maintaining their professional resilience.

As social work practice evolves, supervisors must stay informed about best practices, regulatory requirements, and emerging challenges, such as trauma-informed care, cultural responsiveness, and workplace wellbeing.

High-quality supervision fosters critical reflection, skill development, and professional accountability, ultimately enhancing service quality and client outcomes. Regular training ensures supervisors can navigate working with people experiencing complex circumstances, support staff effectively, and uphold the standards of the profession in an ever-changing landscape.

Explore our range of supervision training programs designed to support and strengthen your practice:

Introduction to Best Practice for Supervision

7.5 hours CPD

19 & 26 June 2025

Advanced Supervision Program

20 hours CPD

6 May 2025, 10:30am – 24 Jun 2025, 12:30pm AEST

Neurodivergent Affirming Supervision – Practical Tools for Supervising Autistic and ADHD Social Workers

1.5 hours CPD

11 June 2025, 10:30am – 12:00pm AEST



Upcoming live CPD webinars and workshops



Did you know
that AASW
members pay up
to 50% less than
non-members?

Webinars

Redefining ADHD in Social Work – Intersectional Approaches Across All Sectors

1.5 CPD hours – Category 2: Skills and Knowledge

Join us for a webinar that redefines ADHD Narratives, moving beyond deficits to embrace strengths in advocacy and support.

7 May 2025, 10:30 am to 12:00 pm AEST

Navigating Perimenopause Mental Health and Relational Impacts

1.5 CPD hours – Category 2: Skills and Knowledge

This webinar addresses the critical yet often overlooked phase of perimenopause and its profound impact on women's mental health and relationships.

12 May 2025, 10:30 am to 12:00 pm AEST

Trauma-Informed Care – Effective Psychotherapeutic Interventions

1.5 CPD hours

Learn practical, evidence-based psychotherapeutic interventions that can be applied across diverse service settings to support clients experiencing trauma symptoms, with a focus on cultural responsiveness and appropriateness in the Australian context.

28 May 2025, 10:30 am to 12:00 pm AEST

Workshops

Building Trust and Connection with Children: A Trauma-Informed Approach using the PACE Model (FPS)

3.5 CPD hours – Category 2: Skills and Knowledge

This workshop will challenge participants to reflect on the prevailing values and beliefs about how we address challenging behaviours and learn relational strategies that focus on building trust and connection as a priority.

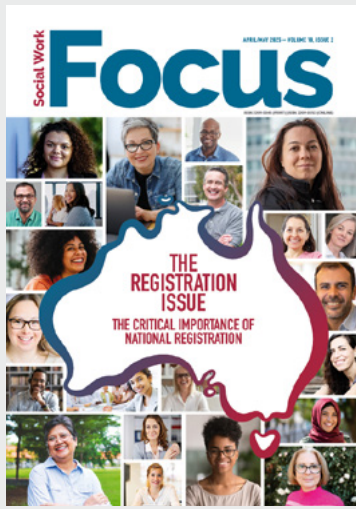
30 April 2025, 10:30 am to 2:00 pm AEST

Advanced Supervision Program

20 CPD hours – Category 2: Skills and Knowledge

AASW's Advanced Supervision Program is an 8-week evidence-based program with self-paced eLearning, online collaborative workshops, facilitator-led Masterclasses, and Coaching Circles.

6 May 2025, 10:30 am to 24 June 2025, 12:30 pm AEST



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 through MyAASW in the flipbook style.

You can advertise in *Social Work Focus*.

Social Work Focus advertising rates 2025

Full Colour	Single Edition Rate	4-Edition Rate
Full page (inside covers)	\$1,320	\$3,696 (\$924 per advert)
Full page (back cover)	\$1,595	\$4,466 (\$1,116 per advert)
Full page	\$2,020	\$5,656 (\$1,414 per advert)
Half page (horizontal)	\$755	\$2,114 (\$529 each)
Quarter page (horizontal)	\$440	\$1,232 (\$308 each)

Prices are inclusive of GST

Advertising Specifications (Sizes)

Full page 210 x 297mm Plus 3mm bleed	Half page horizontal 192 x 132mm Horizontal	Quarter page horizontal 192 x 74mm Horizontal

KEY:	Artwork area	Note: Measurements are width x height
	Bleed (min 3mm)	
	Page trim	

To Book Your Print Advertisement

To discuss your [advertising needs](#), email marketing@aasw.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 marketing@aasw.asn.au

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

2025 SWF Advertising Deadline Dates

Issue	Artwork Deadline	Publication Date
June-August	27 June 2025	Week commencing 7 July 2025
September/October	29 August 2025	Week commencing 8 September 2025
November/December	24 October 2025	Week commencing 3 November 2025