

Social Work

# Focus

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AASW

Australian Association  
of Social Workers





**AASW**

Australian Association  
of Social Workers

# RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TODAY

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - TOGETHER

**RENEW BY JUNE 30 2022**

YOUR MEMBERSHIP FEE MAY BE TAX DEDUCTIBLE IF PAID BY 30 JUNE





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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](http://aasw.asn.au)

### MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES

P: 03 9320 1000

[membership@aasw.asn.au](mailto:membership@aasw.asn.au)

### HORIZON CAREER CENTRE

[horizon@aasw.asn.au](mailto:horizon@aasw.asn.au)

[www.horizonemployment.com.au](http://www.horizonemployment.com.au)

## Branches

### Australian Capital Territory

[aaswact@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswact@aasw.asn.au)

### New South Wales

[aaswnsw@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswnsw@aasw.asn.au)

### North Queensland

[aaswnqld@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswnqld@aasw.asn.au)

### Northern Territory

[aaswnt@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswnt@aasw.asn.au)

### Queensland

[aaswqld@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswqld@aasw.asn.au)

### South Australia

[aaswsa@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswsa@aasw.asn.au)

### Tasmania

[aaswtas@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswtas@aasw.asn.au)

### Victoria

[aaswvic@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswvic@aasw.asn.au)

### Western Australia

[aaswwa@aasw.asn.au](mailto:aaswwa@aasw.asn.au)

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### Guidelines

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### Editorial and advertising enquiries

Marketing and Communications Officer

P: 03 9320 1005

[editor@aasw.asn.au](mailto:editor@aasw.asn.au)

[www.aasw.asn.au](http://www.aasw.asn.au)

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### NEXT EDITION

Contributions for the Spring 2022 issue will be accepted until Friday, 29 July 2022.

**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.**

### EDITOR

Amanda Place

Angela Yin

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

Join us on social media:





# National President's Report

**Is there a palpable change of sentiment in the air post-election day? Are we, perhaps, entering an era of less combative politics with a focus on equity, the environment, respect for women, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people? It is early days, but that is my hope.**

As for things that are changing, former Prime Minister Paul Keating once said, "When you change the government, you change the country"; let's hope that our new Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, the Labor Party and those they work with, effect real change.

As I write this, positive action is already taking place, with the interim Home Affairs Minister, Jim Chalmers announcing the return of the Murugappan family to Biloela as they await their asylum application. I congratulate members Angela Fredericks and Bronwyn Dendle in Biloela on their campaign to bring this family home to Biloela. Our Senior Policy Adviser Angela Scarfe interviewed them on how they ensured that the family were not deported during the last four years. You can listen to it on our podcast, *Social Work People* [here](#).

On a broader perspective, during the election campaign, we promoted many of the issues that matter to social workers through our National Policy Platform. The same document takes the AASW's policy focus through the next

two years and we are looking to work with the incoming government, and the cross-benchers, in the short term. The full policy platform can be found [here](#).

Our platform provided sensible advice on the need for a huge increase in affordable social housing as well as JobKeeper payments that maintain human dignity. This key advice is routinely ignored by the major parties. It is an enduring paradox that progressive governments find themselves in trouble at election time, if they do not address the root causes of inequality. Centre-right parties in many western democracies have successfully appealed for votes in outer suburban, rural and regional areas when the material circumstances of those voters has not improved. These appeals are always based on blaming a shifting 'other'. Let us hope we can escape this cycle.

I am also pleased to announce that the AASW is progressing the application for non-profit status with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission (ACNC). This process,

**VITTORIO CINTIO**

AASW National President

which was approved at the extraordinary general meeting in March, will deliver hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings through non-profit pricing across key products and services the Association uses. It will also mean that we are able to access grants and other government funding, which are not available to us at the moment.

The process will take about six months and we will keep members updated on the progress. There will be no change to the day-to-day activities of the Association, as our current activities are non-profit in nature. That is, all funds are currently and always have been, invested into member services.

Finally, I also announce that Director Alex Bhathal has resigned from the Board. I thank Alex for her service to the Board during her tenure from November 2020 to May 2022 and wish her the very best for the future.

*Vittorio Cintio*

Vittorio Cintio





# CEO's Report

Welcome to the Winter edition of *Social Work Focus* and another milestone for the Association. Welcome to our 16,000th member, Mannie Cormie, who has been kind enough to appear on the cover of this edition and to share his story with us. Only two editions ago we celebrated our 15,000th member, Yifan Wang, showing just how fast the AASW is growing, and our need to continuously improve our member offerings.



**CINDY SMITH**

Chief Executive Officer



EMPLOYED

**46,000**



FUTURE GROWTH

**23.2%**



WEEKLY EARNINGS

**\$1,736**



FULL-TIME SHARE

**64%**



FEMALE SHARE

**84%**



AVERAGE AGE

**42**

Social work as a profession is growing, in fact it is predicted to grow by almost 25 per cent from 2021 to 2026, and thereby provide more opportunities for our members: [Overview](#).

A growing membership also leads to greater demand from our members and employers to specialise. Reflecting this impending demand, we are happy to announce that will be offering three new credentials later this year; Accredited Supervisor, Accredited Older Persons Social Worker and Accredited School Social Worker. The CPD team are already offering live webinars and online workshops which count towards these new credentials: [Live Online](#)

As the Association grows rapidly our voice and representation of the profession to government is greater. No other body represents social workers with the same advocacy influence as the AASW. Our unity and louder voice delivers outcomes for members and the profession as a whole. Last year we achieved registration of social workers in South Australia and there is significant movement at the national level.

Just prior to the election, the Community Affairs References Senate Committee [published a report](#) which examined the administration of registration and notifications under AHPRA. The AASW lobbied the Senate committee to include registration of social workers under AHPRA for

the security of service users and the professionalism of the workforce.

Recommendation three of the report specifically stated "The committee considers there is a substantial case for regulation of currently unregulated professions including social workers, aged care workers and personal care workers and recommends the Ministerial Council, consider whether these professions should be included in the National Regulation and Accreditation Scheme."

Our other very big news is that mental health services provided by AMHSWs are now part of ancillary cover with Bupa, one of Australia's largest private health funds. Bupa has 3.9 million customers in Australia, so this is a fantastic outcome for AMHSWs.

Since the last edition of *Social Work Focus*, we conducted our biennial Member Needs Survey. I hope you had the chance to contribute to it. We had a record participation of more than 2,100 members. Such strong engagement helps the Association plan its future direction; we look forward to sharing the results with you soon.

Over the past few months, we added significant resources to our Member Engagement and Retention team to ensure your calls are handled efficiently. The team has been kept busy with members renewing their membership and this investment is paying dividends



with your calls rarely joining a queue. On average we handle approximately 1,200 calls per month. During May we handled 2,282 calls - with 90 percent being answered in an average of 44 seconds.

As you know, we have been able to maintain our membership fees at the same rate for four years and we believe we continue to offer great value for money, when compared to similar professions. Our membership fee includes \$20 million of professional indemnity insurance and \$20 million of public liability insurance. Like for like, with professions such as psychologists, occupational therapists, or speech pathologists, our membership fees remain substantially lower. You can see our analysis [here](#).

When you consider all the other benefits your membership provides you, including continuing professional development (CPD), advocacy, publications, and self-regulation, this


builds a level of quality assurance that employers of social workers and members of the public recognise. Membership of the AASW remains extraordinary value for money.

As Vittorio highlighted in his National President's Report, the Association looks forward to establishing a productive relationship with the new federal government, led by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. As you can see from the National Policy Platform article in this edition of Social Work Focus, we are determined to advocate on issues that our members have told us are important to them.

Many thanks to all the members who contribute to our policy agenda; we are your professional body and are here to represent social workers and your professional interests. Please keep engaging by reading our newsletters, attending our consultations and

completing our surveys. And of course, by maintaining your membership!

Until next time.



Cindy Smith







## Mannie Cormie

### A personal quest and a career set to blossom

An interview with  
our 16,000th  
member

Graduate social worker, Mannie Cormie, is a Gomeroi man living and working in Port Macquarie in northeastern NSW. As our 16,000th member, we contacted him to have a chat about his career. His complex background and personal search for meaning provide an unexpected glimpse into this 25-year old's capacity to support his clients. Thank you, Mannie, for sharing your story and we wish you well for a long and richly rewarding career.

Mannie Cormie, 25, grew up near Tamworth, and at the age of 12, moved to his grandmother's remote farm near Attunga. In 2015, he left home and a loving family affected by generational trauma, to study social work at Charles Sturt University in Port Macquarie.

Today, he is on a personal journey that embodies acknowledgement of his past, an embracing of his heritage and optimism for the future as an Aboriginal man.

Mannie works at Kirinari Community Services, supporting people in their homes, work and community. Initially involved in inter-care transitions, Mannie now concentrates on in/out-of-home care support, advocacy and consultation with people living with a disability, and young people. He describes the work as high demand for the team involved, particularly due to the time demands associated with client behaviour support.



“It was nerve wracking, but I needed to develop my strength and identity, to express a sense of pride.”

Many clients live with a disability, perhaps an acquired brain injury or a diagnosis of Autism, trauma or mental illness. While they may hope to “get back to normal”, their attempts to re-engage with family or peers are often complicated by volatile backgrounds and consequently, a deep lack of trust. “We spend a lot of time with each client, helping them operate day-to-day,” Mannie says.

He currently works intensely with three clients and two self-identity as Aboriginal. The population of Port Macquarie is changing as more Aboriginal people seek support, a growing Sudanese community is found in Coffs Harbour and there is an expanding population of young families, in contrast to Port Macquarie’s more traditional aging population.

Surrounded by a strong team, Mannie enjoys the peer network of support workers, behaviour support practitioners, social workers, nurses, psychologists, GPs and Aboriginal health practitioners. “We may not have all the answers but we’ll be honest and seek solutions through others. We’re fundamentally proactive.”

Six weeks before *Social Work Focus* contacted Mannie, he had taken steps to become a “recognised member” of the Gomeroi Nation. He sat before 30-40 council members, presenting his family’s heritage and describing how he wanted to express his Aboriginality. Mannie described how he addressed his past while setting the foundations for the future.

“It was the culmination of a personal search for identity where I was asking ‘What does my Aboriginality mean

to me?’. It was nerve wracking, but I needed to develop my strength and identity, to express a sense of pride.”

Mannie grew up in a community where he often heard Aboriginal people described as dole bludgers and lazy. At home, his family expressed shame and avoided addressing their tragic past.

“In my family, my grandfather and then my father, were ashamed of our past. From as far back as my pre-teens, this played on my mind.”

When he went to uni, he met like-minded people who encouraged him to explore his past and recognise his Aboriginality.

“My father, aunt, peers and friends gave me the courage to stop being fearful or ashamed.”

Mannie’s great, great grandmother, Josie Cormier, a Gomeroi woman, was taken from her Pilliga-based family in the 1890s and ‘given’ to wealthy landowners, the Cormie family. Josie had three children with one of the Cormie family’s sons. The children grew up elsewhere but as members of the Cormie family, and Josie worked as a domestic servant for the family, and for others to whom she was ‘lent’, for the rest of her life. She died in her forties. There is no grave to mark her passing.

Mannie is a direct descendant and grew up knowing his great grandfather, Stanley Cormie, and grandfather, Keith Cormie, lived in denial and with a sense of shame due to their mixed heritage. Mannie’s grandmother, Jill Cormie, met Josie but would never discuss the topic in great detail with

a feeling that “being half-caste was almost worse, in their eyes”.

And so, Mannie presented himself to the elders recently, somewhat fearful that “they might look at me and be critical”. Instead, he sat before them and received recognition. “They assured me I was not the first to go through this experience. It was a massive weight off my shoulders.”

Mannie’s aunt, nurse and community supporter Fiona Peters, was there and has been a life-long inspiration. And while his father Michael did not attend, Mannie says his dad has taught him to remember every person’s humanity – and has played a major role in helping him reach this moment.

“He has taught me not to judge, to take the time to listen and to allow months or even years to learn and understand. It’s hard to spend that amount of time when working as a social worker, but I strive to put his lessons into practice.”

As one of our newest members, Mannie says he is keen to keep learning and to develop his skills and to “keep my mind open and fresh”.

The team at the AASW are proud to serve our members and wish Mannie every success.



GRADUATED FROM  
YOUR SOCIAL WORK  
DEGREE LESS THAN  
TWO YEARS AGO?



MAKING A DIFFERENCE - TOGETHER

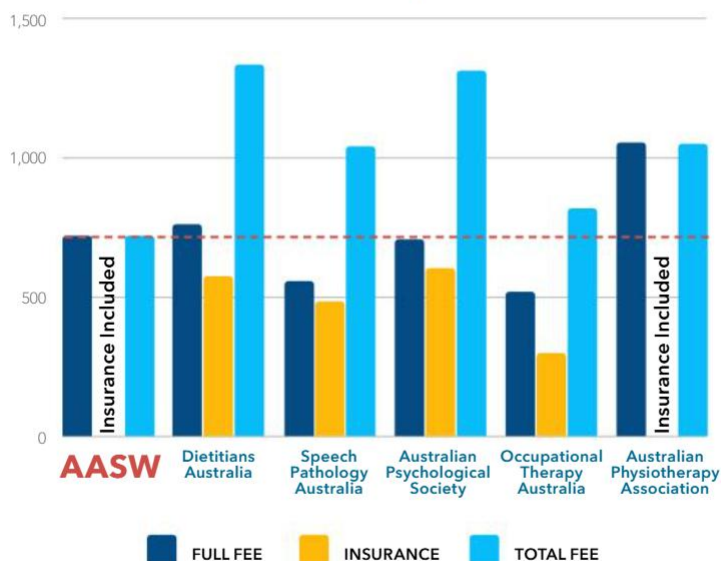
## Making a difference — together

This is the tagline for this year's renewal season. Do you make the most of your membership? Here are some of the benefits included in your membership that you may not know about. Let's take a closer look.

### INSURANCE

Professional practice comes with its risks. Did you know that AASW membership is one of the few professional bodies that includes the cost of \$20 million professional indemnity and \$20 million in public liability insurance? And we are pleased that it is used by our members who, unfortunately, sometimes need to make a claim. You wouldn't drive a car without insurance; why would you put your professional practice at risk by not being a member or letting your membership lapse? See how membership compares when insurance is included:

### How does AASW compare in 2022?



AM I  
ADEQUATELY  
COVERED?



MAKING A DIFFERENCE - TOGETHER



## SELF-REGULATION

Did you know that your membership tells your employer and the public that you are bound by the AASW Code of Ethics and Practice Standards? If you have been a member of the AASW for a while, you will know all about our campaign since the 1960s to have statutory registration of the social work profession – similar to psychologists and other health professions. Our hard work and dedication in this space paid off in 2021, when South Australia passed the Social Worker Registration Act 2021; the implementation of which is currently being worked through.

Find out more: [here](#)

All this time however, in lieu of a statutory registration scheme, the AASW has stepped-in and stepped-up to ensure the highest level of professional standards are met and accountability frameworks are put in place. We set the standards of social work education and practice, provide an ethics consultation service and take complaints from the public. It is a huge job and is included in your membership. The Code of Ethics is the most downloaded document from our website.

Find out more: [here](#)

## CPD

It is the hallmark of all professionals to participate in continuing professional development (CPD), and social workers are no exception. It ensures that your skills and knowledge are being kept up-to-date, that you are taking care of your professional wellbeing through regular supervision and that the community can have confidence in your skills.

Why not see what we can offer at the exclusive member price? [here](#)

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY

The Association promotes and advocates for the profession and its role in advancing human rights and social justice. We have just run a campaign to promote our National Policy Platform during this election to advance the social work agenda. We are truly making a difference together when our members engage with our policy initiatives, such as consultations and surveys.

Find out more: [here](#)

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

Are you looking for your first job or looking to make your next career move? Then sign up to daily or weekly job alerts on Horizon Career Centre. Social workers are highly sought after and Horizon is chock full of opportunities.

Scroll to the bottom and sign up!  
[www.horizonemployment.com.au/](http://www.horizonemployment.com.au/)

## PROMOTING YOUR SERVICES

Did you know about our Find a Social Worker and Find a Supervisor search portals? You can publish your details in these public registers to ensure that GPs, other social workers and the public can find you if they need a social worker or a social work supervisor.

[Find a social worker](#)

[Find a supervisor](#)

## TRADEMARKS AND POSTNOMINALS

In addition to our fantastic credentials in mental health, family violence, clinical social work, disability and child protection (with more in the pipeline), did you know that these and more are accompanied by postnominals and registered trademarks to promote your expertise?



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As we mentioned before, all AASW members are accountable to the Code of Ethics, therefore the community and employers can have confidence in all AASW members. Here are postnominals that members can use to promote themselves on LinkedIn, business cards, email signatures and resumes:

- Ordinary members - MAASW
- Accredited members - MAASW (Acc.) (those who have completed 30 hours of CPD in accordance with our CPD Policy).
- Accredited Mental Health Social Worker - AMHSW
- Accredited Clinical Social Worker - ACSW
- Accredited Family Violence Social Worker - AFVSW
- Accredited Disability Social Worker - ADSW
- Accredited Child Protection Social Worker - ACPSW

### THE HUB AND PROFESSIONAL NETWORKING

We accelerated the launch of our digital networking space the Hub back in 2020 to ensure members could network with each other during the COVID era. There are so many new groups and a

general members group to share ideas and network with your colleagues. The branches and practice groups also conduct online and face-to-face local networking. Have a look in the twice-monthly newsletter the AASW Insider and on our website to find an event near you.

Check out the [Hub](#).

### PODCAST - SOCIAL WORK PEOPLE

Each month, your host Angela Scarfe educates and inspires us with her ability to draw out the incredible achievements of the social workers she interviews. Her interviews have included Ellen Beaumont, a former Matilda-turned-social worker and the two women behind the #HometoBilo campaign, Angela Fredericks and Bronwyn Dendle.

Listen wherever you get your podcasts! [Social Work People podcast](#)

### EXCLUSIVE MEMBER BENEFITS PROGRAM

Have you ever taken advantage of the AASW Member Benefits Program? You can get cheap movie tickets, travel and holiday deals, appliances, home loans, insurance (including health), laptops, SpecSavers optometrists and more. Check it out [here](#).

### MENTORING PROGRAM

In 2021, we launched a national Mentoring Program for social workers. It is a fantastic program that we endeavour to run each year. In 2022, we had over 380 applicants. We make the pairings and provide resources and support for this program. Did you know that participating in the program counts towards CPD as well?

Find out more: [here](#)

### RESEARCH

Social work research is the key to the development and knowledge of social work practice and innovation. The AASW National Research Committee fosters this vital work that informs the unique skills and attributes of social workers. We promote research projects to participants and the outcomes are often published in academic journals, such as the AASW's internationally-respected journal, Australian Social Work. The AASW provides grants for research as well.

Find out more: [here](#)



**BECOME AN  
AASW MEMBER  
OR RENEW TODAY**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - TOGETHER



**EXPERIENCE  
THE BENEFITS  
OF BEING AN  
AASW MEMBER**

MAKING A DIFFERENCE - TOGETHER



# AASW campaigns during the Federal Election 2022

The AASW actively campaigned during the 2022 federal election. We advocated for the AASW's vision of *Wellbeing and Social Justice for All* to political parties, candidates and the broader public.

## OUR NATIONAL POLICY PLATFORM



At the beginning of the year, we surveyed our members to nominate the issues they think we should advocate on and the reforms and improvements they want to see.

Based on member responses, previous consultations and submissions, we proposed a comprehensive set of policy reforms and priorities which we want to see action taken on.

Our *Code of Ethics* provided the overarching framework for the National Policy Platform to present a coherent and cohesive vision for a community based around respect for persons, social justice, and the integrity of our profession.

We argued that registration of the social work profession is a necessary step in providing high quality and safe services for vulnerable people.

We called for policy reforms to ensure they reflected our human rights obligations. We proposed a suite of service improvements and innovations to ensure that they meet the needs of vulnerable people.

You can see all we did on the Federal Election [here](#)

You can see our National Policy Platform [here](#)

## FOLLOW UP

Following the launch of our National Policy Platform, we contacted key decision makers directly: sending letters to Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Anthony Albanese highlighting the many reasons why they must show national leadership in ensuring safety and quality of services for all Australians by implementing a social work registration scheme.

We developed stand-alone factsheets for our critical asks - covering registration, mental health, income support and housing, which we sent to parties and candidates, securing positive responses.

## MONITORING THE CAMPAIGN

As the election campaign progressed, we noted the absence of informed discussion about the issues that matter to and impact on our members. We kept members informed on the issues, through our website and the Social Work Australia Hub. We compared the positions of the parties, and provided our assessment of party policies, as well as providing links to other community campaigns. We provided information on how members could take action to influence the candidates and parties on the issues that matter to them.

## OUR ASSESSMENT

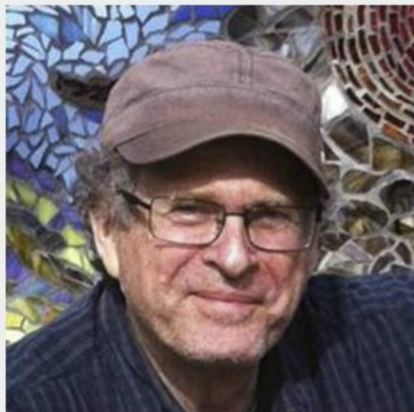
After analysing the positions of the major parties, we concluded that not one party had outlined a range of policies which adequately addressed the range of concerns of our members identified.

As we noted:

*Regardless of who forms government, they will need to develop more detailed policies and service responses. Much more will need to be done if our vision of Wellbeing and Social Justice for All is to be achieved.*

As the next government is formed, we will be following up with the newly elected parliamentarians in both houses to ensure that our message on recognition of the social work profession, human rights and social justice is heard; and translated into meaningful policy change.

For more information, contact [social.policy@aasw.asn.au](mailto:social.policy@aasw.asn.au)



## Vale

### Andre Zonn

26 APRIL 1953 - 30 MARCH 2022

The AASW Victorian Branch Management Committee is sad to announce that our colleague and friend Andre Zonn passed away recently. He served on the Branch Management Committee at the time of his passing.

Andre was a pivotal member of the National Social Policy Committee during his three years of involvement (2012-2015), particularly in regards to the policy areas of Indigenous issues, remote and rural issues and Child Protection. He was a reliable, supportive and highly productive committee member and a gentle, wise and valued colleague and friend.

He had input into the first AASW Reconciliation Action Plan (2013-2015).

Andre held a Master of Social Work from the University of Melbourne and a Bachelor of Behavioural Science and worked in child protection in the community services sector with disadvantaged, marginalised individuals, families and communities. He worked with many organisations, including VCOSS, ARACY, Blue Knot Foundation and SNAICC.

Andre was a devoted member of the profession, our Association, a wonderful friend and we will miss him dearly.

•



## Barbara Sturmfels

11 JUNE 1926 - 27 MARCH 2022

Barbara Sturmfels has died at the age of 96. She developed an interest in social work growing up in Richmond during the Great Depression and attended the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1947, having completed a Bachelor of Arts and a Diploma of Social Studies. She worked as a social worker for the Commonwealth Department of Social Services between 1948 and 1953, working in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. She then resumed her career as a social worker in 1969, working in schools for the Victorian Department of Education. She obtained a Diploma of Education in 1975. Barbara finally retired from the department in 1991. She contributed a chapter to Phillip Swain's book *The Shadow of the Law* entitled 'Social Work in Schools', published in 1995. At that time, she was a member of the Victorian Committee of Management of the AASW (Victorian Branch).

Barbara was a member since 1 January 1948.

*This tribute was provided by Barbara's son Michael Sturmfels.*

•





## Catherine Muriel Scantlebury James Bassett (Cath James)

15 FEBRUARY 1931 – 14 MAY 2022



The AASW Victorian Branch received the sad news that AASW Life Member (1999) Cath James died on 14 May in Elizabeth Bay Lodge, Sydney at the age of 91. Cath taught at the University of Melbourne's social work course from 1963 to 1996. She was devoted to the social work profession and had a lifelong commitment to promoting close links between education, practice and research locally and internationally. She made a strong contribution to Australian health social work practice and will be particularly remembered for her role in establishing the Mount Sinai (New York) Social Work Leadership Enhancement Program in Australia which has been in existence for over 30 years. Cath was a member of a group to establish the first international conference on social work in health and mental health care in Israel in 1995, going on to secure the second conference (1998) for Melbourne, with the last conference in the series held in York (England) in 2019.

Cath's modest and self-effacing manner belied her drive and rigour. In retirement she moved to Sydney to marry Dr Ian Bassett but remained connected to the profession through the NSW Retired Social Workers Group. Cath is survived by one son and five grandchildren, and she will be greatly missed.

*NOTE: See AASW Vic Branch Vol 4 No 1 Autumn 2010: "I couldn't go into an ivory tower" by Cath James and Jane Miller p.2-7 for full account of Cath's career.*

•



AASW Credentials  
Recognising Leaders  
in Social Work

## Be recognised as a leader

AASW Credentials are proof of your  
experience and leadership potential

START HERE



## David Cox

1938 - 2022

La Trobe University wish to acknowledge that we are deeply saddened by the passing of Professor David Cox.

Professor Cox had a distinguished career in social work and related fields and was the second Professor of Social Work at LaTrobe University.

In 1957, under the umbrella of the World Council of Churches, he helped establish a non-government organization that eventually became the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC). He worked at the EMC while completing his Arts degree, then in 1959 left Australia to work with refugees as a volunteer on the border of Austria and the then Yugoslavia.

Professor Cox then completed a PhD with Prof Jean Martin at La Trobe University while he was working at the EMC the 1970s. In an [interview with the AASW](#) for a spoken memories project, he describes how Jean Martin was the Professor of Sociology and one of the leading people in the migration field.

In 1975 he became Director of International Social Service, an agency that focuses on inter-country social work. In 1979 he joined the Social Work Department at The University of Melbourne to further develop courses on cross-cultural social work until 1988, when he became Professor of Social Work at La Trobe University. Professor Cox came to La Trobe University with the goal to internationalise the curriculum and strengthen the role of social development in the social work curriculum.

Professor Cox developed a Masters in International Social Work (coursework) and it attracted a high number of international students. He also supervised a number of PhD candidates in international social work. The candidates were mostly international and came to Australia on AusAid scholarships. He also contributed to undergraduate teaching through offering an elective subject in International social work. He did much work on the development of our undergraduate and post graduate offerings.

As a Professor at La Trobe he also offered inspirational leadership and mentoring support to many staff particularly those at the regional campuses as they developed their skills in teaching and research. The depth of his knowledge related to social policy and his ability to connect this to social work practice provided the basis of our continuing high expectations of our teaching of social policy, which is highly valued by students.

He retired in 1999.

We are proud to have had Professor Cox, a globally recognised as a leader in international social work and social development, have such an important influence on Social Work at La Trobe University.

We extend our deepest condolences to his children Marcus and Robyn, his extended family and friends.

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## Edna Osztreicher

1959 - 2021

Edna Osztreicher died in December from the scourge of ovarian cancer. She endured those two years with grace, humour, determination and a certain stoicism and steely courage, very much as she lived and worked over the 62 years of her life. Her death is a great loss to our community, but we also celebrate the contribution Edna made to the social work profession and to the many clients and colleagues Edna worked with.

Edna was a first-generation holocaust survivor and it seemed a natural progression that she was one of the first workers in 1989 to be employed by The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture at its first home in Parkville, Melbourne. Edna remained at Foundation House for fourteen years, embarking on a social work degree during that time.

Edna brought to her work the knowledge of living in three countries, four cultures, and four languages. This life experience gave her a unique understanding of her clients. Her colleagues noted that in her work as a first line of contact with survivors, "Edna had an incredible ability in welcoming people, to knowing what people could deal with". "She understood and acknowledged the person, not just the problem - without an overlay of condescension. They felt relief and safety in her presence". Colleagues also paid tribute to Edna's efforts in binding the staff together as a team.

All of these qualities were taken into Edna's subsequent work - Chairing the Board of WestCASA; working for six years at Barwon CASA; working for six years on the Better Outcomes For Mental Health Programme at West Vic Primary Health Network, together with developing her own busy private practice with veterans, forgotten

Australians, carers, NDIS users and a great diversity of other clients.

In the many years that Edna was my colleague and friend, I knew her to be a staunch and relentless advocate for her clients, some of the most marginalised and disadvantaged members of our community. Additionally, Edna was a skilled therapist with a deep understanding of the awe-inspiring, mysterious and challenging world of the subconscious, always looking to extend her knowledge and skills.

In talking to colleagues about Edna's contributions their comments are encapsulated in the following quote: "At all times Edna gave 100 per cent. You knew that her work would be of the most ethical and compassionate standard and that she would advocate fiercely for them. It was a great pleasure to work with Edna, who was also a great colleague who taught me so much about the world".

In the background, Edna's sea-faring husband, Bill, was always supporting her and encouraging her to achieve some work/life-balance by 'sailing the seven seas'. Despite Edna's deep misgivings, he managed to persuade her that boats could be safe. Many of these adventures were regaled to us by Edna over the years, including trips to New Zealand and circumnavigating Bass Strait and Tasmania.

What better way to farewell Edna than in some of the words of her CEO at The Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture, Paris Aristotle, who wrote to Edna when she left Foundation House.

"...I still remember the joy the first time we met all those years ago when the Foundation was still a dream. I couldn't have asked for a better friend and companion during those wild, exciting and early days. What the Foundation has become is because of how people,

particularly you, gave of themselves to create a caring and dynamic place of sanctuary. It is rare in life that we have an opportunity to do something like that and you should feel incredibly proud of what you have achieved and helped to build...know that the best parts of you are embedded in the best parts of us and we are richer for that".

Thank you Edna, for the sanctuary you gave so many and the best parts of you that are embedded in the best parts of us.

### Desley Scott

Accredited Mental Health Social Worker





# How much of my social work degree is there in my professional practice?

JACINTA FRAWLEY

Some years ago, I published an article exploring, “How much social work is there in my private practice?”. This year, as I gently start looking toward retirement, I am wondering how much of my social work degree has been, or still is, in my professional practice.



## About the author

Jacinta Frawley is a social worker in private practice in southern Sydney. She is also a Jungian analyst trained in Zurich, Switzerland, and a training analyst for the Australian New Zealand Society of Jungian Analysts (ANZSJA). Previously, she was Director of Training, C. G. Jung Institute, ANZSJA.

The last two COVID years have brought much spring cleaning. Is there a shelf in Australia that has not been tidied, de-cluttered or reimagined? Well, as I discovered, as we faced another Christmas very close to home, there was an untouched ‘shelf’. While exploring the crawl space under my house, at the very, very back, past several generations of family memory boxes, two old surfboards, various old appliances which we keep ‘for spare parts’, some very suspiciously sounding mouse-like squeaks, and some well-fed spiders, I came across a dust-encrusted plastic storage container. I dragged it into the open air. Unlike Proust’s joy at biting into the sweet madeleine which opened the vista onto his childhood, I gasped at the stale and slightly decaying smell of old yellowing paper.

Intrigued by what this might be, I overcame my inner Marie Kondo and gingerly touched the pile of papers and started reading. For these were the photocopies and indeed folders of hand-written notes from my undergraduate social work degree which I had completed in 1981. Is that 40 years ago? Where had this box been? Obviously, it hadn’t been touched in the 18 years we have lived in this house, and for the other 20 odd years—did I carry it around with me? Was it always one of those ‘rainy day’

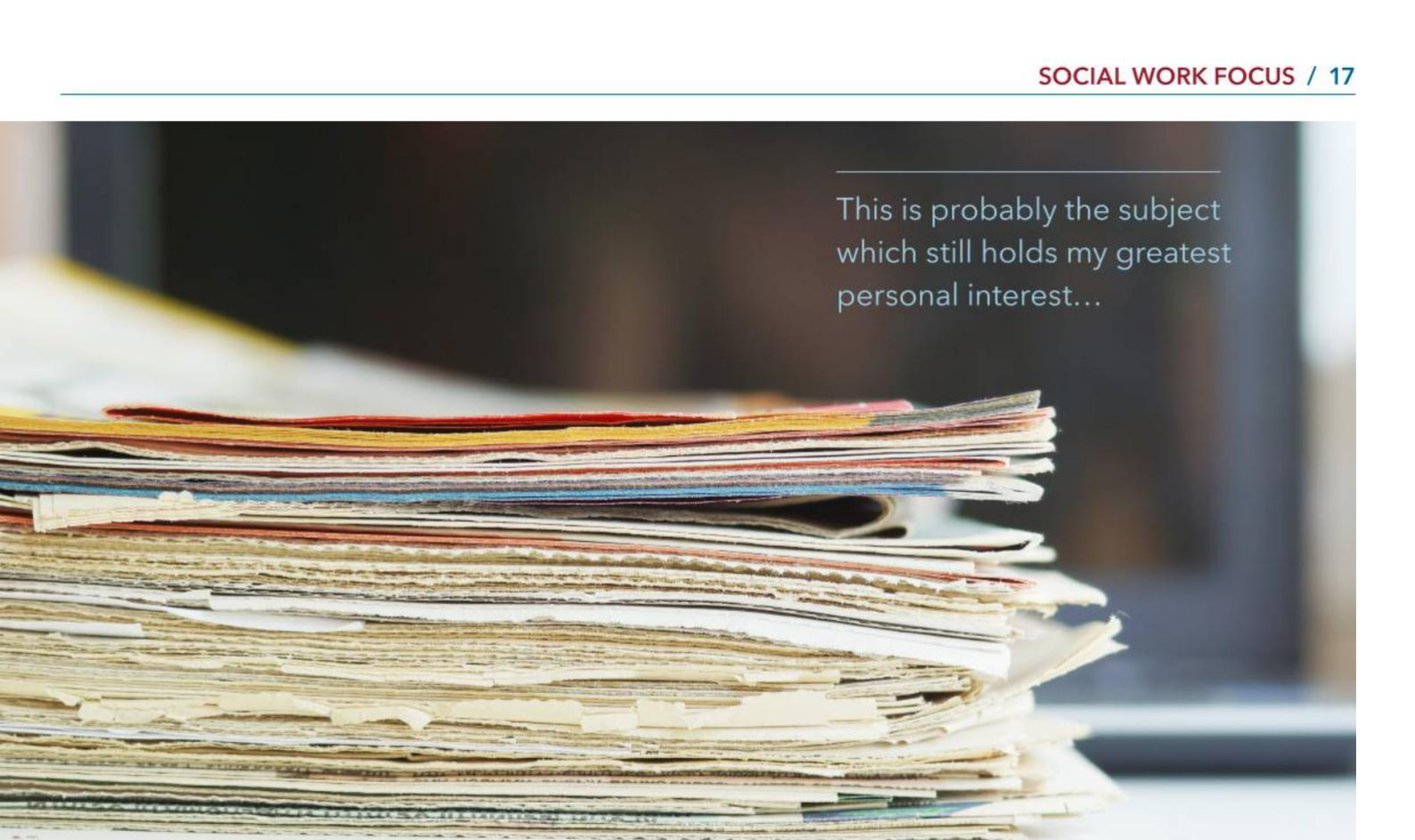
de-cluttering jobs that I never got around to?

After the initial nose-wrinkle at the pungent smell I am drawn to the physicality of the documents. The paper is rough to the touch, not smooth like contemporary printer paper; yellowed, not white, the print faded and slightly indistinct suggesting it was many copy versions away from the original. The touch recalls the acrid smell of the ubiquitous Gestetner machine which I remember always had its own room, claustrophobically filled with reams of paper, smells of ink, and not infrequently the clunking sound of something not working, inevitably followed by the click, click, click of high heels as one of the secretaries ran to fix the rogue machine. Do I remember this from university days as a student or later workplaces? I am not sure, but the Gestetner room was always the place to look for missing tutors, up to their elbows copying lecture notes.

Wikipedia informs me that the font is probably “Courier”, the most common typeface of typewriters at that time, which today we mostly see on retro menus or nostalgic advertising. And the documents are held together with now-rusty stapled “foolscap”. No A4 here.

I am impressed at the care the lecturers took to provide students with detailed lecture notes and





This is probably the subject which still holds my greatest personal interest...

reference lists. Of course, the notes had to be collected in person each week. Hmm... a carrot perhaps to attend lectures?

I am curious. What have I kept, and what has been discarded? I can see that I have not kept everything. For instance, there is nothing from my major in community work. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, community work was the exciting place to be. Full of enthusiasms, we did intend to change the world and perhaps some of us did. Though I never earned a cent from this major, I hope the professional, charitable and community organisations where I volunteered over the last four decades benefited. For me, community work became an avenue for altruism.

I begin by going through the articles from a subject called Moral Philosophy. I remember this as the most difficult subject, confronting a naive teenage country girl, who had only been to Sydney once before moving there to study, with a taste of the complexities of the human condition. This is probably the subject which still holds my greatest personal interest, as my bookshelves are full of philosophy, which, like my teenage self, I know to

be so fascinating and important, yet still so difficult to comprehend.

The largest group of articles are on the topics of psychoanalysis and transcultural social work. And these have indeed dominated my professional life for almost 40 years. After my undergraduate social work degree, I trained in psychotherapy (Jungian analysis) and have been in private practice for almost 30 years. I spent a decade working overseas – in a second language – with people from diverse cultural groups who were often also working in their second, third or fourth languages. Displaced through choice and circumstances, I am moved to reread these articles and wonder if there was already an instinct in my younger self, even then, to move towards these interests.

Were these interests – psychoanalysis and diverse cultures and languages – always there drawing me on, or did I stumble onto a path and then select from my education what I needed at the time? The first thought of being drawn on, is of course a classical Jungian expression of teleology and the second, of stumbling onto a path and using the resources available, an explanation based in ego-psychology. I did discover Jung through social

work—but that was later, after my Bachelor's degree. As I write this piece 40 years on, I am rereading the ego psychology articles I have just found – so perhaps there is something in both disciplines which came together in my professional practice.

When I commenced my social work degree, university education had been free for only five years. As a cohort we were enthusiastic and emboldened, many of us the first in our families to go to university. Feminism was strong and it is perhaps the feminist articles which I recognise as having had the greatest influence on my person and profession.

I am enormously grateful to have found this treasure box, to have taken the time to reread and revisit a time when all was new. I can confidently cheer that there has always been a great deal of my social work degree in my professional practice. And these souvenirs of the past have not yet outlived their usefulness for now, after having re-read them, these yellowing pages are being transformed in the compost heap and will return next year to nurture my garden, just as my social work degree nurtured my person and practice for all these years.

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# Social workers as professional thought leaders

JUDI APTE

From my work in leadership development and organisational development I am interested in the role of social workers as professional 'thought leaders'. To be successful in this arena, social workers need to adopt three leadership positions: to be a champion of evidence and new ideas, to co-create knowledge that connects research evidence and working knowledge, and to facilitate transformative learning.



## About the author

Judi Apte has qualifications in social work and adult education. She gained a Doctor of Education (UTS) by researching the expertise involved in the facilitation of transformative learning. Judi specialises in organisational development strategies and leadership development programs, reviewing supervision systems, team development initiatives, leadership coaching, and workshops.

[www.judiapte.com](http://www.judiapte.com)

I am particularly interested in the challenges when social workers move into leadership/ management roles with the expectation that they will 'change' the team's practices. They are often selected because their own practice draws on relevant research evidence and up-to-date thinking. The social worker is then positioned as the champion of evidence, key ideas, and related practices - leading a process of knowledge translation.

Some team members are likely to find the evidence validates the best of what they are doing, or they welcome the challenge and opportunity of a new map for practice.

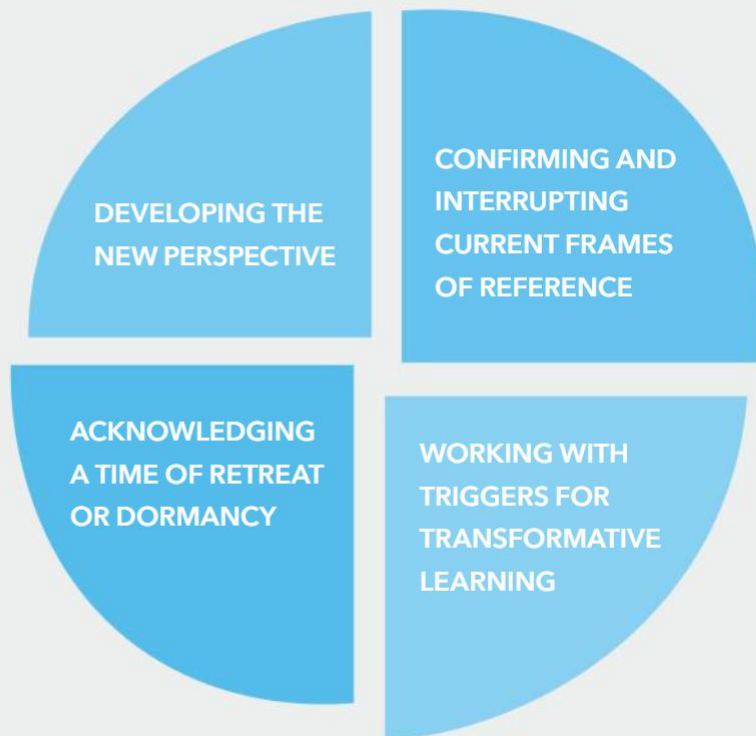
However, some team members may only engage with the evidence or trends if careful attention is paid to the existing working knowledge of the team. Working knowledge is defined as knowledge that is situated in work, while decisions about the authenticity, value and legitimacy of knowledge are based on whether it is useful to address specific practice challenges in specific, local contexts. Working knowledge is synoptic and is focused on an entire process - it includes process-based knowledge and propositional knowledge, actions and explanations, and implicit and explicit understandings. It is less likely to be clear, explicit, and systematic. This working knowledge may be expressed in the service's program logic and theory of change, or it may be expressed through shared narratives of practice in which it is implicit and embedded. The social worker's position can then be one of leading a co-creation process for knowledge formation and re-formation, seeking to test and integrate the research evidence with the working knowledge in the team.

Other team members may experience a strong sense of reluctance or resistance to engage with the new evidence

The social worker's position can be one of leading a co-creation process for knowledge formation and re-formation...



Figure 1



and practices. We need to consider the organisational context and map the barriers and incentives that may have prevented innovation, squashed effective practice, or overly focused practice within a specific knowledge silo over the years. Then we may need to take up a position of leading a process of transformative learning – in the team, in the organisation, or in the sector.

Much professional learning is additive; practitioners gain new information, deepen their understandings, and extend their skills within their current meaning perspective. However, previous knowledge, strategies and personal strengths may be blocking the emergence of new solutions. Thus, we may need to invite and facilitate transformative learning. In his classic article, Jack Mezirow writes:

*Transformation in meaning perspective is precipitated by life's dilemma which cannot be resolved by simply acquiring more information, enhancing problem solving skills or adding to one's competencies (1978: 108).*

in Apte J (2009)

He outlines the role of the leader as an empathic provocateur:

*... encouraging participants to face up to contradictions between what they believe and what they do... and discrepancies between a specific way of seeing, thinking, feeling and acting and other perspectives (Mezirow 1991:366).*

in Apte J (2009)

My research indicates that facilitation of transformative learning involves interventions both as an empathic provocateur and an evocateur. I developed a framework that links these aspects of the role, at different stages of the process (figure 1).

In conclusion, effective professional thought leaders demonstrate qualities for personal authority and professional authority. They take up leadership positions as a champion of evidence and new ideas, a leader of co-creation of integrated knowledge, and a facilitator of transformative learning.

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# Social Work in Practice

## Religious freedom and embracing diversity

JOSHUA CETIN



### About the author

Joshua Cetin is an early career social worker who is passionate about supporting the LGBTQIA+ community.

He recently graduated from the University of Melbourne. Previously working with young people, he recognises the importance of diversity and identity.

### Why do social workers still need to advocate for LGBTQIA+ rights?

On face value, it may appear that LGBTQIA+ rights have made leaps and bounds. The AASW recently marched as part of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras and the [Religious Discrimination Bill](#) was [withdrawn](#) from the Federal Senate. However, many people are not aware just how easily the Bill could have passed and the significant impact this would have on the LGBTQIA+ community. It is essential that we continue to support our LGBTQIA+ community and embrace people of all gender identities and sexual orientations.

### What is the Religious Discrimination Bill?

The *Religious Discrimination Bill 2021* aims to protect people of faith

being able to make statements of belief without anti-discrimination recourse. Essentially, an individual or group would be protected by anti-discrimination law if their views or actions are based on religious beliefs.

As social workers, we explore both the micro and macro impacts of the environments we work in. On a community level, the Bill allows Australian religious institutions to discriminate against others, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+, based on their religious beliefs under legal protection. On a micro level, what message does this send to those who are questioning their identity and what is the impact of such discrimination on their mental health?

There was a case in the media recently which demonstrated the harm that statements of beliefs can create in



the community. Earlier this year a Brisbane Christian school was making families sign an enrolment contract denouncing homosexuality. The contract stated the college would only enrol students on the basis of the gender that corresponds to their biological sex and asserted that homosexuality, alongside bestiality, incest and paedophilia, was 'sinful'.

### What's the harm?

While the college's contract succumbed to community backlash and was quickly withdrawn, many people still ask, 'what's the harm?' Many who do not experience this kind of discrimination first-hand genuinely struggle to understand what the problem is.

The harm is that people who don't fit the mould will suffer and be excluded based on religious beliefs. As social workers we fight against such oppressive practices daily, no matter what environment we choose to work in. We welcome those who are different.

Adopting a human rights lens, many groups saw this case as a human rights issue. Human rights lawyers and LGBT services questioned whether these documents had any legal standing. It may sound simplistic to remind readers that as social workers, we hold social justice as a core principle in the communities that we work in. When people are excluded, their access to essential services such as housing, healthcare and education is limited. This has significant impacts on their mental health and can be linked with why LGBTQIA+ people experience comparatively higher levels of suicide than the general population (King et al., 2008).

When debating issues around the topic of identity, the lines between 'freedom of speech' and hate speech become

harmful very quickly. Being exposed to such prejudice and messages of discrimination has a significant impact on the mental health of the LGBTQIA+ community. We only have to look back three years ago at the intrusive practices that were part of the 'debate' around the gay marriage plebiscite in 2017 and the division that it caused in the community. Remember the skywriting of 'NO' above Sydney, the flyers denouncing same-sex parents, and the constant bombardment of TV commercials echoing the message of Simpsons' character Helen Lovejoy exclaiming 'Won't Somebody Think of The Children?!'? Ring a bell?

### What do we still have to work on?

At the time of writing, the Bill has been shelved by the Senate. Currently debate has been put on the back burner, but it begs the question, why was it passed by the House of Representatives in the first place? We need to critically reflect on the following questions:

*Was it from complacency?*

*Are these the general views of our elected government?*

*Are these views reflected and shared in the community?*

It's great that in Australia we can all practise our religions freely. It's what makes our country so diverse. But we also need to ensure that there are parameters in place to ensure that people of all sexual orientations and gender identities have access to the same fundamental services as everyone else. Social workers need to continue to show up and show support for the LGBTQIA+ community. It is essential to understand that the fight is not over and that LGBTQIA+ rights can still be taken away. If we educate the community, we can raise awareness and promote equality. At the risk of complacency, we need to continue celebrating diversity and promoting its visibility in the community.

This is why it is important that we continue to march at events, be represented at community meetings and to proudly wave a rainbow flag.

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## About the authors



**Dr Louise Morley** is a Lecturer in Social Work in the School of Health at the University of New England. She has extensive practice experience in government and non-government organisations working with individuals, groups and communities in Australia and overseas. Her practice areas include health (oncology), disability, rural practice and child protection (specifically child sexual assault). Throughout her career she has focused on the systematic impacts of inequality on rural and remote communities. In 2015 she completed her doctoral research, where she examined the deeply personal issues for workers in a highly contested political and policy environment. Her thesis was concerned with social workers' private experience of professional practice when working with vulnerable children and their families.



**Dr Erica Russ** is a Senior Lecturer in Social Work, and Director of Field Education at Southern Cross University, Australia having previously worked at the University of New England, Australia. Erica brings extensive industry experience to her academic role having experience in Social Work across child, youth, and family services, with particular expertise in child protection and child welfare. During her career Erica has worked across direct practice, practice consultancy, policy, and operational, program, and strategic management. In her academic role, Erica has maintained a focus on social work practice. Erica's research interests include social work and child welfare workforces including worker resilience, social work education, and programs for children and young people.



**Maria Harries AM, PhD** is a Senior Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for Social Policy, Practice, Research and Development (CSPRD) in the School of Population and Global Health (SPGH) at The University of Western Australia and Adjunct Professor at Curtin University, Western Australia. She has a 50-year career in clinical practice, teaching, research, and senior leadership in organisations and on government and non-government boards of governance. She has worked extensively with children and young people who have experienced abuse and with adults who have been placed in Out of Home Care in government, private and non-government organisations and in foster care. She has conducted numerous case practice reviews, inquiries and systems evaluations and has been and remains engaged in the re-design of child and family services in several jurisdictions.

# A chronic and persistent problem in child protection

## the role of social workers in changing the story

LOUISE MORLEY, ERICA RUSS, MARIA HARRIES, BOB LONNE, DARYL HIGGINS, MARK DRIVER

**The relationship between child welfare practice and the social work profession has always been an intimate one because social work knowledge and skills are well suited for dealing with the complexities involved when working with vulnerable children and their families. Over the last 40 years this relationship has been somewhat soured by the increasing numbers of children entering the care system arguably owing, in part, to the incremental removal of professional autonomy in risk adverse organisational contexts.**

The impact these changes have had on vulnerable children and their families is often talked about as a crisis. It is not. It is actually a chronic, deep and persistent problem for which there has been little respite since the overbearing focus on proceduralisation began. The consequences of proceduralisation are twofold. On the one hand, too many vulnerable families are left struggling without receiving the support they need, and on the other hand, too many children are taken into care often for reasons that could have been prevented had the right culturally appropriate supports been made available. These issues are problematic for all children and families coming into contact with statutory systems, but particularly for those who experience marginalisation. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continue

to be disproportionately subject to statutory intervention for issues that relate to poverty. Additionally, children who are taken into care are all too often disconnected from their family, community and culture. Such approaches do little but perpetuate and deepen ongoing cycles of disadvantage.

The seriousness and extent of this problem is reflected in the numerous inquiries into systemic failures within various child protection systems. The recommendations that have emerged have had some influence, resulting in a national strategic policy focus of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*. The framework promoted a public health approach to child welfare and calls for greater investment in a broader range of prevention (primary) and early intervention (secondary) services





so that families get the supportive assistance they need early on, taking the pressure off the statutory (tertiary) services. However, as indicated in the evaluations of this framework, the ongoing pressures on the statutory systems have not abated and marginalised and disadvantaged children and their families continue to pay the price for a system that is fundamentally broken.

One of the enduring themes to emerge from inquiries is that workers, including social workers, are blamed for systemic failures. All too often, their assessments are perceived to be lacking in some way or they did not communicate their concerns in the right way, at the right time, or to the right people or services. Surprisingly, very little attention has been given to workforce issues generally, including the chronic understaffing of statutory services, particularly in rural areas, or the lack of expertise, skills and experience that is required for working with what are often extremely complex situations.

We believe that workforce is critical to making inroads to addressing the chronic systemic problems. Our recent study, [\*Trends and needs in the Australian child welfare workforce: An exploratory study\*](#), published by the Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian

Catholic University, examined the child welfare workforce across the various jurisdictions from a public health perspective, considering the primary secondary and tertiary tiers respectively. We wanted to know if the current child welfare workforce is meeting the current demands on statutory child protection systems and we also wanted to find out if the workforce is prepared for a transition to a public health approach in order to facilitate a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

The results were astounding. Not only did we find the usual problems of attracting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced staff in Australia's tertiary systems, we also found that workers in the secondary tier are not adequately trained for the complex work required to assess and manage risk of harm. Further, the workforce for the primary tier cannot be adequately defined and identified so it is difficult to properly assess the level of knowledge and skill existing in that tier. We also found that the cultural diversity within the whole workforce does not reflect the diverse needs of Australian children and families.

We also found that, given the trajectory of strong growth forecast for health and social care generally and specifically child welfare services, there are not enough social workers graduating



**Dr Bob Lonne** is an Adjunct Professor of Social Work at the School of Public Health and Social Work, Queensland University of Technology. He has authored/co-authored 4 books, 2 monographs, 17 book chapters, 52 refereed journal articles, and 7 major/government reports. He has a longstanding commitment to the systemic reform of child protection and its workforce issues, having over a decade in direct practice, and extensive involvement in international, national and state-based policy and program advice. His research and scholarship have resulted in his participation and contributions to policy forums at the state and federal levels. Internationally he was involved in the Norwegian NORWEL project as well as the evaluation and research of implementation of the Irish programs for early intervention and prevention of child maltreatment with the National University of Ireland, and with the Ministry of Human Services, Alberta, Canada regarding Outcomes Based Service Delivery initiatives in child welfare and Aboriginal Policy and Initiatives. He was a former National President of the AASW and Election Officer of the IFSW.



**Professor Daryl Higgins** is Director of the Institute of Child Protection Studies at Australian Catholic University. His research focuses on public health approaches to protecting children, and child-safe organisational strategies. A registered psychologist, Prof Higgins has been researching child abuse impacts and prevention, family violence and family functioning for almost 30 years. Throughout his career he has published numerous articles, papers and reports that have made a significant impact on policy related to child maltreatment, both in Australia and internationally.



**Mark Driver** has assisted in several research projects that forecast future size and skills profile requirements of the Australian Welfare workforce which were conducted through the Queensland University of Technology and the University of New England. Mark's data management background arises from experience in the natural resource management and vocational education and training sectors as well as formal education in Forest Science, Business Administration, and Education disciplines. He has a strong interest in accessing and utilising data from non-conventional sources.



Not only did we find the usual problems of attracting and retaining suitably qualified and experienced staff in Australia's tertiary systems, we also found that workers in the secondary tier are not adequately trained for the complex work required to assess and manage risk of harm

from tertiary institutions to meet the growing demand. Given that social work is one of the preferred professions for child welfare across prevention, secondary and tertiary services, this is a serious issue.

What can the social work profession do to address this issue? Ultimately, this requires long term workforce planning such as increasing the number of Commonwealth supported places in tertiary institutions to encourage more students to study social work. We can continue to engage in problem solving dialogue through specially focused social work symposiums, such as the one held by the AASW in March 2022, and we can encourage further dialogue about this issue with industry bodies and government departments.

We also need to better support and encourage workers who have a passion for child welfare so they flourish in organisational contexts that are often described as unsupportive and unreflective. With increased professional dialogue and support, social work practitioners, could increase their valuable contribution to changing the workforce narrative in the secondary and tertiary tiers. More can take on leadership roles in their organisations,

promoting the importance of preventive practices and sharing their knowledge and skills about best practice within multidisciplinary teams and within organisations.

They can also contribute by staying up-to-date with the latest evidence to emerge from the relationship-based practice field and promote best practice amongst team members. Their values equip them to lead by promoting ethical and non-stigmatising practice for ensuring the safety and well-being of children.

Social workers don't have to work in child welfare designated roles to become child welfare champions. Child welfare concerns arise in all primary tier services at some point in time: mental health, drug and alcohol, the many forms of hospital social work, aged care, disability, and schools. While child wellbeing may not be written into position description statements, child welfare concerns should be core business for all social workers.

Social work educators have an important role to play in changing the child protection narrative. Educators can inspire students to choose careers in child welfare and can

provide opportunities to participate in innovative learning opportunities. Child welfare issues and concerns could usefully be positioned prominently in Bachelors and Masters programs, which in turn could also result in increased higher degree research in child and family wellbeing.

The ongoing chronic and persistent systemic dysfunction in the child welfare field has persisted for too long and has meant it has failed too many vulnerable children and their families. This problem is likely to worsen over the coming years unless drastic action is taken to strengthen the workforce so that it can meet the needs of the increasing numbers of vulnerable children and families requiring support.

There needs to be team effort for turning this problem around and all social workers, regardless of where they work - education, policy or practice - can all make a valuable contribution to ensure children and families receive the right support at the right time. Developing a stronger, robust, well trained, multidisciplinary and skilled workforce is key for doing this.

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# Nirosha Boaden

## Winner of the 2021 Norma Parker Award

NIROSHA BOADEN

Nirosha Boaden is the recipient of the 2021 Norma Parker Award. Nirosha has been recognised as the best new author in the print edition of *Australian Social Work*, the journal of the Australian Association of Social Workers. Here, Nirosha writes for us, describing her motivations and how Dadirri can influence our social work practice.

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands from which we live and work. I am on Arrernte Country in Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and I would like to acknowledge that the Arrernte people are the Sovereign Original Custodians of the Mparntwe region. I would also like to pay my respects to all Indigenous Elders, past, present, and emerging. Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Being named the recipient of the Norma Parker Award has been a very humbling experience for me and I'm very honoured. The article is titled - *Transition Experience of Families with Young Children in the Australia National Disability Insurance Scheme* (2021).

I am passionate about being a social worker. Every day I try my best to make sure I've positively contributed to the wider community as my aim is to ensure all children, young people, and their families with a lived experience of disability are supported to live a happy and healthy life in Australia.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) are the leading preventable causes of intellectual disability. Those who are prenatally exposed to alcohol will often have impaired intellectual functioning requiring ongoing support across the life course from social workers in varied practice settings

like disability, mental health, early childhood intervention, education, and criminal justice. I am currently writing a thesis for the Professional Doctorate of Social Work at UNSW on *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Rural and Remote Australia*. The thesis builds upon a minor thesis I completed for the Master of Public Health at the University of Melbourne on *Improving the Diagnosis of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders in Victorian Hospitals*.

Currently, I work in the Northern Territory (NT) as a senior specialist in child and youth mental health whilst at the same time undertaking data collection for my thesis. It is important to acknowledge that FASD disproportionately affects children, young people, and communities from rural and remote areas, and First Nations Australian backgrounds. It is important that social workers raise awareness and advocate for increased funding and services that address prevention, diagnosis, and ongoing disability support in all rural and remote communities across Australia, for all children with a lived experience of FASD.

I am privileged to be working in the NT alongside Aboriginal Mental Health Workers and Traditional Ngangkari Healers to meet the social and emotional wellbeing needs of children and young people. As a social worker in this cultural and spiritual



space, I always show respect for, and acknowledge, the ongoing spiritual and cultural connections to the land held by children, young people, and their families through strengths-based, culturally supportive practice. Providing culturally supportive mental health care alongside Aboriginal Mental Health Workers and Ngangkari Healers, we work together to understand the person in their environment by using specific tools and practices such as cultural mapping, Aboriginal narrative therapy, and yarning circles underpinned by an ecological systems framework.

My takeaway message for other social workers in rural and remote Australia, or those who would like to lean in and learn more about culturally supportive practice alongside First Nations Australian communities, is to learn about Dadirri: Inner Deep Listening and Quiet Still Awareness by Miriam-Rose Ungameer.

“The word, concept and spiritual practice that is dadirri (da-did-ee) is from the Ngan’gikurunggurr and Ngen’giwumirri languages of the Aboriginal peoples of the Daly River region (Northern Territory, Australia). NGANGIKURUNGKURR means ‘Deep Water Sounds’. Ngangikurungkurr is the name of my tribe. The word can be broken up into three parts: Ngangi means word or sound, Kuri means water, and kurr means deep. So the name of my people means ‘the Deep Water Sounds’ or ‘Sounds of the Deep’. This reflection is about tapping into that deep spring that is within us (Miriam-Rose Foundation, 1988:4).

### Reference recommendations for culturally supportive social work practice:

Dadirri – Miriam

<https://www.miriamrosefoundation.org.au/dadirri/>

Green, S. and Bennett, B. (2018). Chapter 4: Social work and Indigenous Australians: Ngurambang Yanhambulanha (‘Walking Country’). In M. Alston, S. McCurdy and J. McKinnon (eds). *Social Work – Fields of Practice* (3rd Ed.). Oxford University Press; South Melbourne. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cdu/reader.action?docID=5407333>

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Stewart, B. J. and Allan, J. (2013). Building Relationships with Aboriginal People: A Cultural Mapping Toolbox. *Australian Social Work*, 66(1), 118-129.

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# 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.



## Specsavers Optometrists

Maintaining perfect eyesight is such an important part of being able to work well and live your life to the full, but did you know that a fully comprehensive eye examination is an important health check too?

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*\*Terms & conditions apply.*

## Lenovo



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*\*Discount based on Lenovo online RRP.*



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Westfund Health Insurance is a not-for-profit, member-owned fund providing value cover to more than 110,000 individuals across Australia.

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1300 304 551 // [aasw@memberbenefits.com.au](mailto:aasw@memberbenefits.com.au)





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of Social Workers

# CPD PROGRAM

Social work is a profession with unique professional development needs.

The AASW CPD Team provides a platform for social workers to share their professional expertise and experience with their peers, in a supported learning environment.

## Hear from one of our recent presenters about their experience contributing to the CPD program:

*"I would definitely recommend this experience to other social workers. I work in private practice with autistic adults and as a social work field educator, and I'm also autistic. I wanted to share my experiences of working with autistic adults and my own experience of therapy as an autistic adult. I had huge feelings of imposter syndrome prior as I did not believe my experiences would necessarily be valued by others. The CPD team were amazing. I felt supported in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of [my] webinar and workshops. Most importantly though, [the Virtual Training Coordinators] believed in me and [felt] that I had something valuable to share. Your practice experience is invaluable and sharing that with others helps not only other social workers but the clients we work with."*

Johanna Ng  
Accredited Social Worker

Check out Johanna's webinar [Understanding, connecting, and supporting individuals on the Autism Spectrum](#) or register to attend her upcoming June workshop series [Walk with me: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy with Autistic Adults](#)

**HAVE YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SHARE? SUBMIT YOUR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FORM TODAY!**

## UPCOMING CPD EVENTS

- Solution-Focussed Brief Therapy Techniques for single or limited session interventions
- Normative Narrative Practice as a model of Social Work in Aged Care Mental Health
- Sharpening the Focus: NDIS and Private Practice Social Work
- A Solution-Focused Approach to Single-Session Client Work with Couples and Families
- Supporting families experiencing non-finite loss and grief due to chronic illness or lifelong disability
- Working with Older People who experienced childhood trauma in 'care'
- Leading Teams in Social work practice
- Diaphragmatic Breathing (DB) for Mood Disorders
- Providing Feedback





# 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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		Single issue rate	4 Issue Package
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### Supplying Artwork

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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.

### 2022 SWF Deadline Dates

Issue	Booking Deadline	Publication
Autumn 2022	28 January	4 March
Winter 2022	29 April	3 June
Spring 2022	29 July	2 September
Summer 2022	28 October	2 December