

Social Work

Focus

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NEXT EDITION

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

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

As I write this, I reflect on some of the themes that I raised during World Social Work Day. Thank you to everyone who attended the webinar this year. I was honoured on World Social Work Day to attend the official unveiling of the portrait of Norma Parker at St Vincent's Hospital in Sydney, social work pioneer and first National President of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). She established the Social Work Departments at St Vincent's in Sydney and Melbourne.



VITTORIO CINTIO

AASW National President

The issues I'm reflecting on are:

1. The erosion of dignity across the world
2. Rising inequality
3. A work crisis
4. The climate crisis.

It is impossible to single out any of these crises as being more important than the other. They are deeply interrelated.

Human rights are meaningless unless every human is included. In many countries, human rights activists risk jail and persecution daily. In Australia, we are relatively fortunate to live in a

democratic country with a robust civil society. But we are not immune; our government detains asylum seekers indefinitely in our name. There are right-wing movements here and across the world that seek to erode the universality of human rights by manufacturing and inflaming culture wars. They do this by demonising minority groups, the poor and disadvantaged. In February we witnessed a shocking example of this when the Robodebt Royal Commission heard details about just how far Ministers and senior public servants were prepared to go to keep that scheme alive.

We are experiencing unprecedented rising inequality – real wages are declining and there is a growing divide between the haves and have-nots due to a lack of access to education, health care and opportunities. Housing is seen as a financial investment and not a human right.

Access to stable work is becoming precarious and in addition to low wages growth; there is increasing casualisation of the workforce. The famous Whitehall studies of the 1960s convincingly demonstrated that the more autonomy and agency you have at work, the more probability you have

a longer and healthier life. But current work cultures often mean that our ethical commitments put us at odds with agencies who would prefer us to simply implement repressive policies without question.

And of course, the climate emergency looms large. Our relationship to the natural world is breaking down. We have lost respect for the flora and fauna that sustain us. There is a direct relationship to the way we treat animals and the frequency of pandemics. The increase in fire, drought, floods and cyclones is no accident. The need for sustainability becomes more desperate with every passing day.

As social workers and citizens on the front line, we are using our knowledge and skills day in and day out to tackle these issues. We do our best to minimise the damage, whilst never losing sight of the potential for a better world. Many social workers were involved in the federal election campaign last year

that saw an unprecedented number of candidates elected on issues of integrity and climate. In the recent NSW election, we saw two more independents running on platforms of integrity and environmental sustainability that have taken seats from the former ruling party, in traditionally very safe seats in Sydney's north. The AASW looks forward to establishing relationships with the new Minns government in NSW and the crossbench.

I now turn my mind to the contributions made in this edition of *Social Work Focus*. This year's theme for World Social Work Day was Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action. Well, this edition contains a diversity of contributions. From advice on acknowledging and respecting Country, cultural diversity in social work, international field education, supporting students and embodying healing for survivors of sexual violence, there are some insightful social work practice reflections contained within.

As a profession, we choose to celebrate diversity. We choose to advance gender equity. We analyse and respond on multiple levels at once. We understand the importance of collective action. We don't lose sight of truth and purpose. We work with people sustainably. We recognise and build on strengths.

Vittorio Cintio

Vittorio Cintio

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CEO's Report

Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Social Work Focus* in 2023.



CINDY SMITH

Chief Executive Officer

World Social Work Day was once again a resounding success. This year saw a focus on having a digital component to most events, local and national. Participation and accessibility were the best ever this year with nearly 1,000 social workers registered to attend at least one event. Well done to all AASW volunteers who organised events right around the country.

More than 450 social workers registered for the main event alone, which was a record for a World Social Work Day event. Vittorio spoke movingly about the role that social workers have to play in advancing the values of sustainability and democracy, with our Senior Policy Adviser Angela Scarfe as the host. It was a highly interactive session which saw members following up Vittorio's remarks with conversation and questions for the entire hour.

This summer/autumn has also seen the launch of the AASW digital badges. These are a fantastic initiative that allows you to promote your membership of AASW, your specialised credentials and training that you complete with us. Use them on your LinkedIn and Seek profiles to promote yourself to potential employers, the sector and the public.

It's another way we can all promote our skills and the social work profession. More than a third of you have already accepted the badges. If you haven't yet claimed your badge and would like to, send us a message via our online enquiry form.

The Mentoring Program is now in Cycle 3. We are so pleased to report that there are 369 pairs this year, which is a 102% increase on last year. This is an incredible effort on the part of the program team, as well as the new and returning mentors and mentees. This is a fantastic program to nurture the social work profession and facilitate these enriching professional relationships, which is beneficial to all concerned.

As you start to consolidate your CPD for the end of the financial year, in addition to our award-winning Advanced Supervision Program (which is now tailored to separate streams in Mental Health and Family Violence), we have also just about sold out of our Introduction to Supervision workshop. There is a huge demand for quality supervision, so start your journey today. Also, have a look at upcoming webinars and on-demand CPD for content relevant to your career.

Since my last report, I have appeared in two podcasts, the AASW's [Social Work People](#) and [The Social Work Café](#), the latter being a new brand-new podcast hosted by Dr. Bernadette Moorhead, a prominent researcher in social work identity. If you want to know more about where a career in social work can take you, please listen to both of them. I also urge you to explore our new website and the MyAASW portal. If you have any feedback, please send us a message via our online enquiry form.

And before I go, later in the year, we will be asking for nominations for National Excellence Awards, the social work profession's most prestigious awards. Start thinking about nominating a fantastic social worker you know. Perhaps it's you!

Cindy Smith

RESPECTING DIVERSITY THROUGH JOINT SOCIAL ACTION

This year's theme for World Social Work Day was **Respecting Diversity Through Joint Social Action**. The AASW held 14 events around the country, as well as online, making them more accessible than ever before. Nearly 1000 social workers registered to attend our events and many more held events in your own workplaces.

World Social Work Day 2023

What does this year's theme mean to AASW members?



We are equal due more to our measure of difference than our measure of similarity.

Michael, NSW

“ Understanding we are not uniform in our gender orientation, culture, likes and dislikes and where we are located. Not all social workers live in urban centres.

K, South Australia ”

“ Being accepting and working with many different kinds of people. Treating everyone equally and with compassion

Adam, South Australia



We are different but together we achieve equality. 🤝

Sara, Queensland

“ Kindness, curiosity, empathy, connection and collaboration with all people to decolonise our minds, practice and people from a dominating neo-liberal, profit-driven and capitalist worldview. *Brigitte, NSW*

The main webinar, delivered by National President Vittorio Cintio and chaired by AASW Senior Policy Adviser Angela Scarfe, drew in nearly 500 registrations. The event was a celebration on what we do and how social workers contribute to sustainability.

Our Vimeo account contains Vittorio's World Social Work Day message.



WORLD SOCIAL WORK DAY
21ST MARCH 2023
#WSWD2023



When we have true, respectful relationships and collaboration with everyone regardless of their stories, we can move mountains.

Mandy, Queensland



For me it's about making space in leadership and change making roles for Diversity, especially First Nations peoples, and decolonising our practice approaches.

Kate, Queensland

“ Being with and working with and ensuring any social action is in partnership and cognizant of the many diversities as well as people who have multiple diversities. *Margaret, Queensland*



Couldn't be more timely. This action will bring awareness to the world to stop for a moment and think about respecting diversity. *Krinent, NSW*

“ Working together collaboratively to achieve the outcomes desired. *Deborah, Queensland*



Working together. *Jammu, India*

“ It means to value and respect diversity in our community, to recognise the incredible strengths our neurodiverse community has and can contribute to society. I believe it is important to work jointly and collectively to bring about a greater awareness and actively seek to change judgemental biases to break down barriers that still exist.

Samantha, Victoria



Partnership. You can't respect diversity in a partnered setting if you aren't working collaboratively or working with others in mind. *Amber, South Australia*



AASW launches digital badges to promote social work

At the beginning of March, AASW launched its digital badges. They allow AASW members to display their social work skills and knowledge on platforms such as LinkedIn, Seek and other social media channels.

Every member is entitled to the Social Worker Member badge, including Life Member and Student Member. Members with credentials have been issued with their own relevant badges.

AASW CEO Cindy Smith said, "Members can use AASW digital badges to signify they are qualified social workers or social work students and members of their professional body, which shows they are committed to the Code of Ethics."

"We want our members to claim their AASW digital badge now and use it on social media. Be proud to display this symbol of our profession. The AASW digital badges provide another tool to promote the unique skills and attributes of our members."

She explained that is very important for the health and social services sectors and those who use social work services to recognise and look for the digital badges.

"We are especially excited for the sector and members of the public to recognise AASW digital badges. When you see them on LinkedIn and Seek profiles and in other digital spaces, you can have confidence in the services of a qualified social worker."

The digital badges complement AASW's services to promote social workers to the public, including the [Find a Social Worker tool](#).

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Did you know?

POST NOMINALS

Did you know that eligible members can also use the following post-nominals? (refer to page 8 of the [ByLaws](#))

- MAASW signifies that you are a member of AASW.
- MAASW Acc signifies that you are an Accredited Social Worker.
- And of course, our credentialed members can use AMHSW (Accredited Mental Health Social Worker), AFVSW (Accredited Family Violence Social Worker), ADSW (Accredited Disability Social Worker), ACSW (Accredited Clinical Social Worker), ACPSW (Accredited Child Protection Social Worker).





AASW Digital Badges

Showcasing social work skills and achievements

AASW has created digital badges showcasing skills and accreditation, which members and CPD participants can feature on their LinkedIn profile and other platforms.

Claim your badge today

If you haven't claimed yours yet, please send us a message in MyAASW to enquire about accessing your badge. Every member is entitled to at least Social Worker Member or Social Work Student Member.



Vale Dr Anita Phillips

14 March 1945 – 4 February 2023

Anita served on the board of the Australian Association of Social Workers from 2013-2019. Anita was a dedicated and valued member of the AASW Board.

As well as being a social worker, her varied experience and career included politics, academia, directorships on boards focused on health, aged care and social justice, public governance and social and public policy.

Anita was a huge advocate for the advancement of the registration of social work as a profession. She was the AASW's media spokesperson on

the subject during her time on the Board.

In 2019, the AASW ran two repeat webinar sessions on social work registration, after South Australia held a joint committee meeting on the subject. Anita presented a thorough history of AASW's 50-year registration campaign in August and a second one in October. She was joined by

CEO Cindy Smith and then-National President Christine Craik.

On the day that AASW was informed of Anita's passing, the South Australian government announced the beginning of the implementation of the Social Worker Registration Board. We know that Anita would have loved that and in no small part, she contributed to this event happening.

She completed her PhD at the University of Canberra just last year in 2022. Her thesis was "The Process of policy development using the NDIS as a case study."

Our deepest sympathies and condolences are with Anita's daughters, Rebecca, Melanie, and Keinton. It was an absolute pleasure and honour to work with and know Anita Phillips.



Become credentialed for eating disorders

More than one million Australians are living with an eating disorder at any given time, according to the *Four Corners* report that aired on 27 February 2023.

Some public hospitals have recorded between an 80 percent to 104 percent increase in children with anorexia in the past three years.

Social workers and other mental health professionals and dietitians providing treatment for people with eating disorders can now apply to become a Credentialed Eating Disorder Clinician.

Under the Medicare Benefit Schedule (MBS), individuals with a clinical diagnosis of anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, binge-eating disorder, or other specified feeding or eating disorders are now eligible to access up to 40 psychological treatment sessions and 20 dietetic sessions in a 12-month

period through an Eating Disorder Management Plan.

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, the ANZAED Eating Disorder Credential provides formal recognition of qualifications, knowledge, training, and professional development activities needed to meet standards for delivery of safe and effective eating disorder treatment.

Once credentialed, you will be given a digital badge, the post-nominal CEDC and a published profile on Australia's first online directory, enabling people experiencing eating disorders and referring professionals to find and

connect with you. [Find out more and apply.](#)

If the people you are working with present with eating disorders and are looking for appropriate clinician referrals, [visit the new connected national directory](#) - where you will find credentialed mental health professionals and dietitians who have the qualifications, skills and experience to treat eating disorders.



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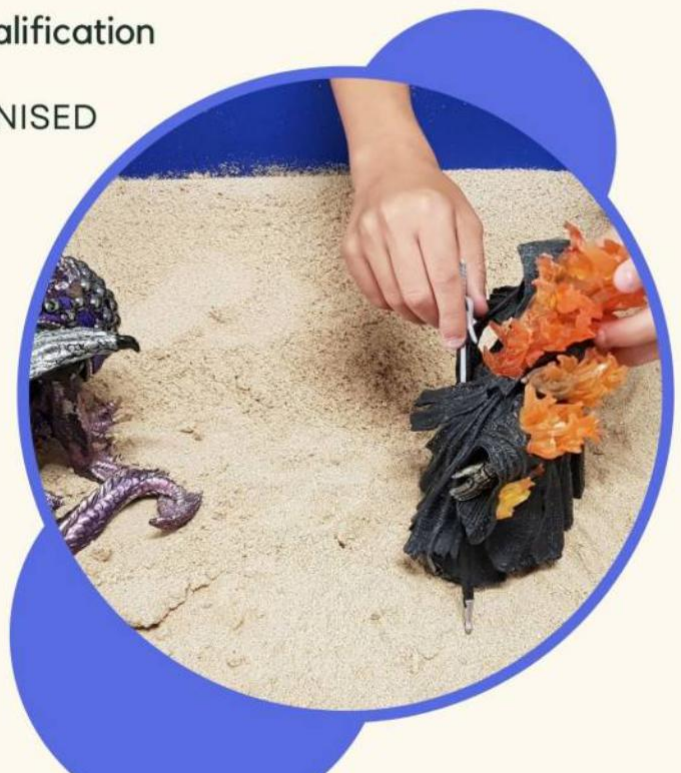
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MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS

Free trauma and disaster recovery resource for foster and kinship carers

MEL JAMES

Social workers in Australia are experienced in working with and alongside clients who have endured a disaster of some kind, whether it is the recent global pandemic or a natural event. Building on existing support services, Mel James has introduced a free training series for kinship and foster carers, social workers, child protection practitioners and children and young people in care.



About the author

Mel James, CEO and founder of Social Care Solutions, an independent organisation specialising in foster care assessment, training, support and consultancy across Australia and New Zealand, has worked as a child protection social worker for over 20 years and is driven to ensure better outcomes for children and young people.

From the Black Saturday bushfires of 2019 in Victoria to the once-in-a-hundred-years Queensland floods of 2022, it certainly feels like we've had more than our fair share of catastrophic events these past few years. The Australian Institute of Family Studies' *Ten to Men Insights #2 Report* suggests around 8% of Australians will be affected by a natural disaster in their lifetime. This number is likely higher now, in relation to natural disasters, yet when the continuing presence of the COVID-19 pandemic is added in, it is safe to assume the majority, if not everyone, we work with will have been affected in some way by disasters in the past few years.

"More up-to-date Australian estimates are needed, especially in consideration of increasing disaster incidence in Australia and the value of recent estimates in disaster planning efforts" (AIFS, 2022). So, for social workers and other practitioners across the country, we must be informed and ready to work effectively with clients, whether in aged care, disability, child protection or with those seeking asylum, before, during and after the fallout of a disaster.

For our company, Social Care Solutions, a child protection

consultancy offering assessment, training and support services across Australia, it became abundantly clear during the pandemic that our most vulnerable clients, the children and young people in and on the edge of the care system, were at significant risk of cumulative harm during and after disasters. While we recognise the critical role of the foster care system is to provide safe, stable placements for children who cannot live with their families of origin due to abuse or neglect, it is widely acknowledged and accepted that this is not often the typical experience of most children who enter the care system.

Safe, stable placements can be difficult to find and maintain, with the number of carers available dwindling over the past decade and the number of children needing out-of-home-care placements increasing. Foster and kinship carers (and residential care workers) caring for traumatised young people, who then experience the trauma of a disaster, whether natural or the pandemic, are tasked with the near insurmountable task of keeping children safe and well while experiencing that same trauma for themselves as adults.



Young people in care have increased rates of exposure to trauma; rates are estimated to be close to 90%, which is statistically significant compared to the general population. In fact, a 2005 study found 30% of young people in foster care met the conditions for a diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, compared to 8% of the rest of the population (Barlett and Rushovich, 2018). While an argument could be made to suggest all children who experience some form of disaster are “traumatised” in some way, we can all recognise anecdotally that without stable, safe, loving, nurturing adults around us, we would struggle to find the skills, strategies and personal characteristics to emerge from disasters more resilient, rather than less so.

Recognising the impact of trauma on the brain and its development, we found when assessing, training and supporting foster and kinship carers that their own heightened states significantly impacted their ability to be responsive and trauma-informed, if they too were in the midst of a disaster significantly impacting their household, their family and even their community. Likewise, in our training of practitioners who were supporting foster and kinship carers, we recognised they too as members of the care team were often experiencing the same disasters and experiencing similar levels of trauma, grief and loss as the people they were tasked to support. Social Care Solutions acknowledged the need for trauma and disaster recovery training for those caring for children and young people in care and, with a generous grant by the NAB Foundation, commenced the development of this training in late 2022.

Our first step in the development process was to talk to, and spend time with, those caring for children

30% of young people in foster care met the conditions for a diagnosis of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

in care who had experienced some form of disaster. We met with kin and foster carers who had experienced floods, droughts, fires and, of course, COVID-19, all the while caring for children with complex trauma-based behaviours due to their experience prior to and during entering the care system. They shared their personal stories of challenge and heartache, grief and loss, as well as their stories of resiliency, hope and connection. We spoke with disaster recovery specialists, who told us about the very different experiences of recovery from natural disasters compared to the global pandemic response.

We met with one of the largest peak bodies for support of foster and kinship carers in the country, Queensland Foster and Kinship Care, to listen to how they have supported their carers during and post the various disaster events over recent years. What unfolded was a clear need for not only training that was accessible to, and easily absorbed by, carers but also for the practitioners who support those carers and the children and young people experiencing disasters themselves.

It was recognised that in order to talk about how disasters impact upon those who are suffering from trauma already, participants needed to have foundational knowledge of what trauma is and how it affects the brain. The first module was developed as a general training unit, exploring the fundamentals of the brain and how stress influences its development and growth, in a user-friendly, jargon-free approach. With no shortage of researchers and authors who have already skilfully articulated the impact of trauma and stress on the brain, we ensured the training acknowledged world-renowned practitioners such as Dr Dan Siegel and his “Flipping Your Lid” concept to help explain key themes.

The second module was for the care team supporting those caring for children and young people in the care system. The challenges of isolation, lack of information, fear, stress and confusion were the most common experiences of COVID-19. During our conversations with carers, carers spoke of times when they experienced high-quality professional support, where practitioners provided a sense of safety and support, even during the most difficult and uncertain of times. These processes and strategies are highlighted in the second module as a platform for social workers, support workers, leaders and managers supporting kinship and foster carers to put in place before, during and after disasters affecting their communities.

The third module was specifically designed for carers by the foster and kinship carers on our training team. This ensured the product was purposeful, realistic and respectful, and it added legitimacy to the module given our carers had also experienced fostering children in care while enduring disasters such as floods and bushfires. The module gently highlights the risks of collective trauma and compassion fatigue while providing practical tools for preparing for future disasters, given the likelihood of their increase and prevalence in Australia.

During the development of the first three modules, it was clear there was an audience we had yet to address—the children and young people in care experiencing disasters as well. This shorter module is narrated by young people in care, with interviews from children of foster carers, who speak of their experience being a family who fosters during floods and the pandemic. It is a child-friendly module for carers, social workers and other practitioners to sit with young people and help them learn strategies for

how to speak up, share their opinions and understand their rights when experiencing disasters of any kind.

This training series is free and accessible 24 hours 7 days a week online to kinship and foster carers, social workers, child protection practitioners and children and young people in care. [Access it here.](#)

Thank you to all who contributed to this incredible development process.

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REFERENCES

- AIFS (Australian Institute of Family Studies) (2022) [Ten to Men Insights #2 Report](#).
- Bartlett, Jessica Dym and Rushovich, Berenice (2018) [“Implementation of trauma systems therapy-foster care in child welfare”](#), *Children and Youth Services Review*, 91(C):30–38.

Five tips to follow when acknowledging and respecting Country

AJ WILLIAMS-TCHEN

Welcome to AJ Williams-Tchen's guide to acknowledging Country. As many readers would know, AJ is the 2022 Aboriginal Social Worker of the Year.

Protocols for welcoming visitors to Country, allowing safe passage and providing knowledge of the land have been a part of Australia's First Nations cultures for thousands of years. Protocols continue today through "Welcome to Country" ceremonies conducted by First Nations people, and with respectful "Acknowledgement to Country" formalities.

Here are five tips to ensure you know the difference between a "Welcome to Country" and an "Acknowledgement of Country", and how to get it right.

TIP 1: DO YOU KNOW WHAT A "WELCOME TO COUNTRY" IS?

A Welcome to Country is a formal ceremony delivered by an elder, traditional custodian or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who has been given permission from the traditional owners to welcome visitors to their Country. It is a ceremony to not only welcome an outsider to Country, but also to grant permission for the visitor to enter their land, and to access their resources under protection of the ancestors and creator beings. A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of any gathering or event. It can take many forms, such as singing, dancing, a smoking ceremony or a speech delivered in traditional

language, English or sometimes a mixture of both.

TIP 2: DO YOU KNOW HOW TO ARRANGE A "WELCOME TO COUNTRY"?

First, it is important that you can identify the traditional custodians of the land where the event is occurring. Making contact with the local Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, the land council or native title representative organisation, or the health service for the town or suburb. It is a good way to gather information and to ask where you would go to book an elder or traditional custodian to undertake the Welcome to Country. It is important to note that most Welcome to Country ceremonies attract costs for the services requested. It is important to book in advance to avoid disappointment and remember that events such as NAIDOC Week and National Reconciliation Week are peak times and are generally booked months in advance.

TIP 3: DO YOU KNOW ABOUT AN "ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY"?

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for anyone (Indigenous or



About the author

AJ Williams-Tchen is the 2022 Aboriginal Social Worker of the Year.

non-Indigenous) to show respect for traditional owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to Country. It can be given by both non-Indigenous people and any First Nations person. Similar to a Welcome to Country, an Acknowledgement of Country is generally offered at the beginning of a meeting, speech or formal occasion.

TIP 4: THINK ABOUT THE WORDING

There are no set protocols or wording for an Acknowledgement of Country, though there are a few guidelines you need to follow.

- Name the traditional custodians if you know them. (You may want to acknowledge all known traditional custodians of the land, if the land is debated.)
- Pay respect to elders past, present and emerging.

As a guide you may say something like:

"I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today. I would also like to pay my

respects to Elders past, present and emerging."

Here is suggested wording if you know who the traditional custodians are:

"I'd like to begin by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, the (people) of the (Nation), and pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging."

Often First Nations people may also wish to acknowledge their own mobs and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people present when undertaking an Acknowledgement.

TIP 5: PRACTISE ... PRACTISE AND PRACTISE...

It is important for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people to hear non-Indigenous people providing a heartfelt acknowledgement and not simply reading a statement.

Even if you are fearful of making a mistake, and need to write it down ... practise it. Learn how to pronounce the traditional custodian's language group (some can be hard to get your tongue

around). Having the acknowledgment read out can be viewed as being disrespectful and can appear as being not from the heart but rather from tokenism and the need to do it.

Incorporating the practice of "Acknowledgement of Country" and "Welcome to Country" into meetings, gatherings, and events shows respect by upholding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural protocols.

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It is important for Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people to hear non-Indigenous people providing a heartfelt acknowledgement and not simply reading a statement

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CONTENT WARNING

The following article discusses themes of sexual violence and domestic violence. These are the reflections of one individual. It is not written to be reflective of all experiences within the sexual violence sector or of all victim-survivors. Please take care of yourself while reading.

**About the author**

Shauna Crimean is a Meanjin/ Brisbane-based social worker who has worked primarily with women experiencing homelessness, and survivors of sexual violence and domestic violence in both government and non-government organisations. Her passion lies in supporting women, those who identify as women and advocating for marginalised people.

A call for change to tackle family violence

SHAUNA CRIMEAN

Violence against women is a significant human rights issue in Australia. So far this year, data indicates that one woman dies every 10 days. Last year, 55 women died violent deaths and countless others were injured. Here, Shauna Crimean outlines systemic and societal failures and provides some clear advice for those working with survivors in legal and therapeutic settings.

The first thing people often say to me when I tell them I work in the sexual violence space is more of an inaudible sound than a word, and sounds something akin to “oooft”. This is usually followed by “that must be so hard” or “I don’t know how you do it”. The thing that motivates me to do “it” is sheer necessity; something must change. We have lost too many women and mothers, killed by their current or former partner. Too many women are raped or assaulted by people who should be trustworthy. This abuse often comes from family members or partners. Too many people have made excuses for this behaviour, minimising the experience of survivors or protected perpetrators. I know this first hand. I have seen it and I have experienced it. I do this work because I know the systemic and societal failures, and we must do better.

The frustrating part is that this behaviour is entirely preventable. The actions and behaviour that lead to domestic and family violence and sexual violence is rooted in gender inequality. We are not born as misogynists; violent behaviour and an urge to assert power and control is not ingrained in our psyche. This is learned behaviour.

I can comfortably say that gender inequality is the root of this behaviour, as is reflected in national statistics. Women and people who identify

as LGBTIQ+ are far more at risk of experiencing sexual assault and sexual harassment in Australia (AIHW, 2020). Moreover, if you are a trans woman, your risk increases further, and further again if you are a trans woman of colour (ANROWS, 2022). Sexual violence impacts people of all genders, including men. In this work, it is critical that we acknowledge that women and queer and gender diverse people are disproportionately represented in these statistics; 1 in 25 men and 1 in 6 women have experienced at least one sexual assault since the age of 15 (AIHW, 2020). Sadly, statistics also indicate that men are the primary perpetrators of sexual violence. During 2018-19, 97% of sexual offenders reported to police were male (Queensland Government Statisticians Office, Queensland Treasury, 2021).

It is not my intent to write a synopsis of horrific statistics. However, it is difficult to discuss the prevalence of sexual violence in our community without mentioning statistics because people still do not believe survivors. People will discredit survivors, question their character, and downplay the pervasiveness of sexual violence. In a previous role, I worked in the prevention space, delivering training about gender inequality and sexual violence and taught young people how to be active bystanders. I expected to receive resistance, but it was still

It is evident that we have so much more work to do to educate our young people about consent and respectful relationships

jarring to receive confrontation and hostility from young men, who were late teens/early twenties without any formal education about this topic, challenging a professional. It is evident that we have so much more work to do to educate our young people about consent and respectful relationships.

More disappointingly, I see this behaviour from professionals employed to investigate this criminal behaviour. Victim blaming and minimising of trauma is rife within law enforcement. I understand the need to be impartial for investigatory purposes, but the level of insensitivity that survivors must deal with is beyond "impartiality" and more in line with judgement, blaming and minimising their experience. We saw examples of this in responses to domestic and family violence during the recent Independent Commission of Inquiry into Queensland Police Service, including the failure to act in accordance with legislation, portraying dismissive attitudes towards women, and an inability to appropriately assess risk or correctly identify the person in most need of protection. The report from this inquiry outlined the changes needed to eradicate this behaviour and culture within law enforcement. However, until there is significant reform to implement these changes and more resources funnelled into the sector, what real change will occur?

Change on an interpersonal level is achievable with our clients, and I have seen the awe-inspiring resilience and strength that survivors possess. But systemic and cultural change is a greater task. There has been a noticeable shift in society over the past few years, which can in part be credited to the "Me Too" movement,

but also the bravery and work of Rosie Batty, Grace Tame, Saxon Mullins and Chanel Contos, to name a few. I have seen an increase in disclosures of sexual violence, meaning that more people are coming forward, talking about their experience and seeking support. However, there is not an increase in formal reporting. I can only attribute that to the failings of our justice system and the perpetuation of further harm and trauma on survivors. There are numerous examples where survivors have spoken about their abuse publicly, and have been scrutinised and vilified by the press, public figures and on social media. Our law enforcement and justice systems have so much work to do, including the need to embed trauma-informed practice into their investigations and legal proceedings.

In an attempt to create some small semblance of cultural and social change, I have a call to action. We each have a role to play in making change, in both our professional and personal lives. So please, I ask of you, believe survivors. Do not question their experience. Support their decisions. Ask them what they need (focus on the strengths perspective). Talk to your children about consent and respectful relationships and help them navigate life and social media when they come across hurtful diatribes. Call out harmful behaviour and language. Question why your problematic cousin thinks that way during Christmas lunch. Ask your boss why they think it is funny that you are wearing a white shirt in the rain (true story). Have the conversations and be the example. Our women need you.

If you are interested in entering the sexual violence sector, I would

recommend making sure you have strong and steadfast boundaries, an excellent supervisor, a safe group of people you can vent to about the patriarchy and a commitment to ongoing understanding about trauma and choice. If you are a social worker supporting survivors of sexual violence and domestic and family violence, I see you. Thank you for your tireless and restorative work and advocacy.

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Embodied healing for survivors of sexual violence

ALYS MCLENNAN

As a trauma therapist and yoga practitioner, Alys McLennan offers some insights into the art of compassionate mirroring to assist her clients.



About the author

Alys McLennan is a counselling social worker and yoga teacher who specialises in child and family trauma-specific care and embodied recovery. She is registered with Victims Services NSW, Yoga Australia and has a decade of experience in the trauma industry. Currently she is the founder of MayaKosha Healing and is a casual academic at Edith Cowen University.

I hear many stories from survivors about the pervasive nature of experiences of sexual violence. It permeates the mind, the body, and a person's sense of safety within themselves and of the world around them. If a person cannot live comfortably in their own mind and body without a sense of knowing and trusting it, daily functioning often becomes a mammoth task.

I started my counselling career as a trauma specific therapist and soon learned the importance of survivors feeling more in control of their internal landscapes. It is, after all, the place we are supposed to be able to turn to for markers of safety, joy, needs-based cueing, early warning signs and so much more. The benefits of embodied healing for trauma recovery are widespread. It enables a survivor to release wounding without fumbling for words; supports sleep and body systems functioning; reduces panic, dissociation or emotional discomfort; integrates mind-body awareness; supports nervous system regulation; and can assist to orient a person towards joy, compassion, gratitude and other resilience-building experiences.

As social workers we are taught regulation strategies such as grounding, deep breathing and mindfulness. However, direct experience of yoga has shown me that these tools live within a rich and diverse healing modality that is a centuries-old scientific method. I can see that the frameworks and models used in embodied healing are the same as those we learn to become trauma therapists, yet my understanding of

the application of somatic tools have been broadened and diversified by combining these approaches.

In practice, embodied healing is versatile and can be incorporated into talk-based spaces or creative activities as an adjunct support or can be utilised as a stand-alone modality. Many of my clients recount that the harm of sexual violence is so invasive that it undermines their own connection to themselves and instead leaves myriad responses such as feeling numb, angry, alone, shameful, anxious, suicidal and more. These experiences are hard to navigate and being gentle or kind to oneself may be fleeting. For many, when activation of trauma-based distress is present, somatic tools can be applied as a pathway back to regulation, responsiveness, nurturing, relief and comfort.

And as a facilitator of trauma recovery through embodied practices, therapists and social workers can become a compassionate mirror to client experiences. In being a mirror for client experiences, we are unconsciously and consciously demonstrating the trauma-contrast position we aim to help them occupy. Some of the markers of a compassionate mirror include those listed below.

A person who is a compassionate mirror:

- is present and authentic
- is regulated in mind, emotions, behaviours and nervous system responses

The impact of “Anonymous 12-step” addiction programs in forensic care

NICKIE DJAPOURAS

Nickie Djapouras has worked with forensic patients for the last 10 years. At the Forensic Hospital in Sydney, most patients have a mental illness and have committed a crime, usually murder of a family member or carer. Over 90% have drug and alcohol issues that contributed to their offence. In this article, Nickie discusses how the introduction of Alcoholics Anonymous and the other 12-step addiction groups are making a difference to patients’ recovery while reducing recidivism.

- provides safety cueing, trust and trauma responsive care
- is attuned, open and responsive
- engages in collaboration and provides choice to increase a sense of empowerment and agency
- can hold space for client reactions and needs
- guides as well as responds and can implement helpful boundaries
- can use pause, silence, vocal tones, body language and speech in meaningful and positioned ways
- implements values and ethics as a helpful orientation for decision-making
- can respond to pace and energy fluctuations with ease
- demonstrates care and compassion
- engages in critically reflective practice.

Safe therapeutic relationships that use embodiment healing qualities can be a conduit for survivors to reclaim their sense of self. By reconnecting to themselves with more ease, survivors can better tolerate their own experiences of self, develop insight into how they may be responding to their surroundings and, in turn, learn to set boundaries, regulate and nurture themselves—all factors in trusting, reconnecting, coping and thriving.

When patients requested access to Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Gamblers Anonymous (GA), they told us these groups were familiar and accessible in their communities. Forensic patients predominantly suffer from a dual diagnosis of mental health and substance use, according to 2017 internal data collection. Ongoing substance use is a strong indicator for violent reoffending and recidivism; however, the Anonymous groups’ popularity means forensic patients are taking steps towards tackling substance use, violent reoffending and recidivism.

The Forensic Hospital is a 135-bed, high-secure mental health facility for mentally ill patients who have been in contact with the criminal justice system, and for high-risk civil patients. The hospital is an integral part of the

Forensic Mental Health Network in NSW. It provides specialist mental health care to adult men and women, and adolescents. All clinical services are provided by the network through a multidisciplinary team of medical, nursing and allied health professionals. The hospital was purpose-designed to enhance the delivery of contemporary clinical programs.

The AA, NA and GA programs in the Forensic Hospital was recognised by patients as a friendly and effective way to connect with other peers in the community who have overcome similar addiction issues. They reported that they could more easily share their similar struggles with peers than with professional staff. They also felt they could connect with a 12-step group and sponsor during their stay and once they were discharged because of the high availability of groups in





local communities in comparison to mainstream services. They said this would help them with ongoing support and avoid them becoming lonely once discharged.

Following patient requests for the “Anonymous 12-step” program, AA was introduced into the Forensic Hospital in June 2019. AA, NA and GA are abstinence programs, and they promote 12-step principles, the first being the admission by the participant of being powerless over their addiction. The only requirement for membership in these groups is a desire to stop alcohol, drugs or gambling. AA, GA and NA also have a spiritual step where members must connect to a god of their own understanding. Following its strong demand, NA commenced in the Forensic Hospital 6 months later and in 2022 GA began.

In these groups, patients discussed their strong fear of reoffending and how they would cope with a less restricted environment on discharge where substance use and gambling were significantly more accessible. Patients reported that being able to hear the stories of others that had successfully made it through addiction has inspired them to do better. They said identifying with peers gave them the confidence and hope to say that they could do it too.

Although AA and NA initially were conducted as face-to-face groups in the Forensic Hospital, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the groups moved online. They continued online through

2020–2022 with AA and NA leaders locally, interstate and internationally zooming into the Forensic Hospital to lead groups for the patients. The Anonymous groups were the only hospital-wide groups able to be maintained throughout the COVID-19 period. Patients now also run their own peer-led groups amongst their patient cohorts between externally led sessions.

Patients say they appreciated sponsors reaching out to them when they felt lonely and were more able to share shameful experiences. A common theme emerged from the Anonymous 12-step programs in this secure setting: patients felt less judged by the fellowship of leaders and participants that enabled them to continue to attend these groups and share further.

Patients said they experienced less stigma, in particular, in the AA program and they also realised that alcohol had been a serious problem in their lives, leading to other drugs and spiralling them into mental health problems and violent behaviours.

The popularity of the groups introduced into the Forensic Hospital over the last four years and their ongoing use of the Anonymous 12-step fellowship when transitioning to the community highlight their effectiveness in high-secure settings as a way to reduce substance use, loneliness and recidivism, and to provide seamless community transitional support.



About the author

Nickie Djapouras is an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker who works in the Forensic Hospital in Sydney. She has been a social worker for over 30 years, working in a variety of mental health and community settings including interstate and internationally. Nickie can be contacted at Nickie.djapouras@health.nsw.gov.au

International field education

An enriching learning experience for student learning and practice

ANNIE TOWNSEND

Annie Townsend is the co-founder of Social Work International Nepal and has been offering international field experiences for Australian social work students since 2018.



About the author

Annie Townsend is a social worker with 20 years of experience as a humanitarian worker. She has worked in south-east Asia and north-east Africa. She also has 15 years of experience as a university academic.

This has included curriculum design, international social work teaching, field education supervision as well as having had articles on international field education experiences published.



Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, sourcing enough quality field education placements was already a challenge for most Australian-based university social work placement teams. This was largely due to increasing enrolments, competition for placements, and significant funding cuts to social services. To counter these pressures, international field education was offered to social work students as viable and enriching learning experiences. Unfortunately, with the onset of COVID-19, it was no longer safe for students to travel and study internationally. One of the impacts of the pandemic was the undue pressure to place students domestically whilst ensuring all AASW requirements were met under strict pandemic management conditions.

In this post-pandemic world of opened borders, social work placement teams are again sourcing international field education opportunities. Anyone watching this space will be aware

of the emerging partnerships and sharing of placement resources between placement teams. This is complemented by an elevated interest from students seeking such opportunities in south-east Asia and the Pacific for 2023 and beyond.

There will continue to be challenges of course, including provision of quality pre-departure preparation, allocation of AASW approved supervision, and post-placement debriefing. These elements are not always included as vital capstone components for successful student learning, despite research findings arguing their necessity.



Annie Townsend Social Worker, enjoying trekking the Annapurna Ranges in Nepal



Lake Phewa Pokhara – one of the many sites students will spend time during their placement

INTERNATIONAL FIELD EDUCATION–NEPAL

In 2018, I created Social Work International Nepal (SWIN) as another arm of my social work consultancy, which I established in 2005. I have since developed professional relationships with local Nepal-based non-government organisations (NGOs) that specialise in gender-based violence, child rights, social impacts of climate change, poverty alleviation, and disability advocacy. I live and work in Nepal for four months each year, where I provide face-to-face, individual and group supervision to students while they complete their field education.

2023 AND 2024 OFFERINGS

In 2023 and 2024, SWIN is offering field education experiences to social work students. Students are matched with an NGO well aligned to their interests, skills, and learning areas that they seek to develop.

PREPARATION AND IMMERSION FOR STUDENTS

Integral to successful student learning, I facilitate a pre-departure preparation program, two in-country immersion experiences, and a field education debrief once students return home. Students are encouraged to use these components as learning goals in their placement agreement reports.

Immersion one: Five-day cultural immersion in Kathmandu and Pokhara

Timing: At the beginning of placement

Activities:

- Exploration of the geopolitical and cultural aspects of Nepal
- Orientation to key locations such as sacred temples and historical sites
- Visits and activities with NGOs including introductory language classes
- Meetings with UN agency personnel, local political leaders, and social justice advocates.

Immersion two: Five-day mountain retreat

Timing: Mid-placement

Activities:

- Five-day trek through the Annapurna Mountain ranges and visits to local villages
- Reflection activities
- Guest speakers
- Meditation classes.



Bec, social work student, completed her field education in Nepal in 2019

THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

In 2019, Bec, from La Trobe university was offered an international placement in Pokhara, Nepal. While based at a child-rights NGO, she worked with the social work research team and collected important data on the needs and insights of children living in the slum areas of Pokhara.

Three years later Bec still feels that the experience has informed her social work practice. She has an in-depth knowledge of complex humanitarian contexts, which she applies to her current work. The field education experience also provided Bec with many opportunities to build strong relationships with other students, NGOs, the communities and colleagues.

Here is a [link to an interview](#) with Bec.

For all student and university enquiries and a prospectus, please contact SWIN on: socialworkinternationalnepal@gmail.com; annietownsend@hotmail.com. Mobile: 0422 460 963.

A “rebellious act” to support students in distress

SARAH FARRELL-WHELAN

A Finnish program to support students who experience mental distress or are staying away from school is having an impact in the Blue Mountains, NSW. In this article, Sarah Farrell-Whelan, the wellbeing coordinator at Korowal School, discusses a radical approach.



About the author

Sarah Farrell-Whelan is the wellbeing coordinator at Korowal School, an Independent K-12 school in the Blue Mountains, NSW. Sarah has spent 20 years working in the child and youth mental health space with a focus on community development, and as a therapist. Sarah is interested in implementing Open Dialogue practices and principles in school settings.

We meet differently now. We all come together around the child, the child being at the centre of their social network within a school. If talk needs to happen regarding a student of any age at any stage, we prioritise the child's voice in the space. Without holding an agenda, we hold our purpose and start with the question “What is important for us to talk about today?”

Korowal School is a K-12 Independent school based in the Blue Mountains. It is a human-centred school that focuses on creating compassionate and discerning voices for a sustainable world; it is an educational institution where relationships are the heart of the learning process.

Over the past five years, in response to increased mental distress and school absenteeism of students, we have been establishing a way of working together in our school that has been developed from the Finnish Open Dialogue approach.



At the time of writing, we are not currently aware of any other schools working in this way.

Open Dialogue is a needs-adapted social network response to working with those in distress. Open Dialogue emphasises the present moment, working with all the voices in a network to seek new meaning or to change a situation. Staff at Korowal have been trained to support this process in which a student's family, teacher, support services and school support staff are invited to a meeting to talk together, alongside the student. We listen and hold off on solutions or plans until we can talk together in an open, non-judgemental, non-pathologising way. We minimise the talk that happens outside of these meetings with limited "pre-planning" or discussion after the meeting. These meetings guide the support and adjustments that are to be in place for any student.

The role of social work has been imperative to this process. I believe social workers are always on the hunt

for a system that can be stretched, bent, changed, improved and adjusted to better suit those it serves.

Schools are complex, multifaceted organisms that are always seeking to improve the way they provide the greatest standard of education to children. Schools are spaces filled with staff dedicated to this process, working with the other adults in a child's life. There is so much care, concern and commitment despite the barriers that complicate this process. We hold the child through the most foundational years of their life. Despite this common purpose, the current structures of our educational institutions tend to support a multiplicity of separate lines of communication and interventions that can, in fact, cause tension, conflict and confusion. In this process the child may be seen as the source of "the problem" and the broader social context is not understood.

In addition to the above structural restraints, schools also face the increased medicalisation of young

people's difficulties with the pressure to seek diagnosis in the quest to receive further resources.

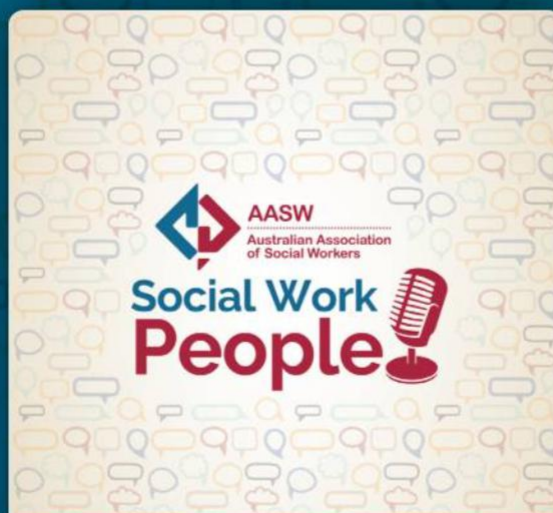
At Korowal, we use this Open Dialogue approach to prioritise meeting together, to build relationships and to let those we speak about speak for themselves. This is a rebellious act in a time-pressured, resource-poor environment. Korowal is currently undergoing research in partnership with Monash and Sydney universities, with teachers and parents sharing some positive experiences from meeting in this way.

This is not only my story. This is the story of the community at our school. It is just today that I happen to be the author sharing.

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Cultural diversity and social work

A reflection of acceptance and hope for the future

LYANNE TAM

Social worker Lyanne Tam shares her perspectives on the way subtle racism can wear down those who experience it, while commenting on how her attitudes have changed through necessity and with a growing sense of optimism.

As a second generation Vietnamese Australian, born in Australia to refugee parents, the concept of cultural diversity in contemporary society rarely strays far from my thoughts. The abolition of the White Australia Policy by the Whitlam Labour Government in 1973 gradually saw an influx of Vietnamese refugees into Australia and this wave of migration included my parents, whom I consider to be the pioneer generation of change and hope.

My growing up in the nineties in Australia was a mixture of a strong desire to not be different, to blend in and, hence, counter my cultural identity, and a curiosity, of sorts, pertaining to traditions my parents upheld from Vietnam. My parents engaged in low-paying labour jobs in the nineties. They were extremely hardworking in their field, albeit experiencing overt and covert racism in the community and their workplaces. They managed a level of resilience that I will never cease to admire.

With my lived experience of growing up navigating two distinct cultures, the remnants of colonisation have added continued challenges and deep learning to my identity and professional practice. There are days when the full weight of racial injustice—either seen or experienced

first-hand or read about across news and social media platforms—takes me to a defeated space. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a recent example of when racist incidents towards people of Asian heritage led me to question the strength of humanity to generate compassion in times of uncertainty when people of all races are impacted.

I want to reflect more specifically on the idea of racism taking on subtle yet detectable forms, in such a way that it chips away at the notion of cultural diversity, causing silos and segregation in workplaces and pockets of society. The discrepancies can range from a patient dismissing medical advice from a doctor who is overseas-qualified to a real estate agent who only contacts successful rental applicants with Anglo-Saxon-sounding names.

Over the last decade, I have witnessed and seen situations where white privilege plays a colossal part in decision-making, opportunities and access. In everyday transactions, white privilege is highlighted in white people's ability to seamlessly move through personal and professional realms. To this end, the dominate race in current contemporary western society has greater power and resources available to them, relative to



About the author

Lyanne Tam is a social worker, with more than 10 years of experience, currently practising social work in a federal government agency. Before social work, Lyanne worked for Museum Victoria, where she was based at the Immigration Museum for seven years.

... when you are a person of colour trying to make a difference to the lives of people ... there are added structural and systemic barriers that you ... need to reconcile in order to be effective

people from ethnic groups in the same position.

People from ethnic and diverse backgrounds are integral to enhancing community richness; indeed, there are human rights laws governing fairness and equality for all. However, the nuances should not be overlooked. The struggle as I see it lies in an inherent bias that people of colour need to strive harder and hustle more to prove their standing and influence than their white counterparts to acquire similar outcomes in life and work. Of particular note is that culturally and ethnically diverse women are sometimes, or often, not seen as being qualified, deserving or taken seriously as a subject matter expert in their field. Cultural diversity is lacking more and more the higher up an organisational structure you go such that this unspoken and understated form of power imbalance is something I find problematic in the twenty-first century.

Invariably, I have wrestled with a desire to do more to educate and challenge the views on cultural diversity and forms of racism around me. There are times I question assumptions, there are times I advocate with passion and fervour and there are other times when I find myself not reacting at all to inequalities. The effort to continually break down barriers has been longstanding for me and, in part, has led to periods of burnout and despondency. Therefore, what I have come to comprehend, over

the last decade of practising social work, is that when you are a person of colour trying to make a difference to the lives of people with whom you engage, there are added structural and systemic barriers that you, as a professional, need to reconcile in order to be effective. This is the reality as I see it in the current climate.

Through the pandemic and seeing movements relating to racial injustices play out across the world—like Black Lives Matter—I have reached a point of acceptance for the things I cannot change. People's insecurities about a particular race or races have actually allowed a renewed sense of peace and maturity in my identity and professional practice. I feel the weight of racial inequality a little less, in everyday life, now that I have accepted that barriers and discrimination will, to some degree, remain. However, there is hope! As pockets of society increasingly become more progressive and thus more informed as to the importance of celebrating diversity, I observe a paradigm shift of sorts that is happening slowly but surely.

Ensuring representation is a primary tool to enrich cultural diversity in society and workplace settings. Representation is powerful in facilitating education of different cultures as well as dispelling the myths and fears people may hold. Representation is about giving equal opportunity for all races to be reflected

in all domains of life and work. In the mainstream domain, it has been great to see Marvel Studios cast a first Asian superhero in their cultural storytelling of the film *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*. Similarly, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast: A 30th Celebration* is a musical television production that saw the first African-Filipino woman play the role of a Disney princess on screen.

In Australia, representation continues to increase in the form of cultural diversity in newsrooms (Tracy Vo) and sporting teams (Aliir Aliir), in emerging authors (Rawah Arja), in politics (Penny Wong) and in law (Nyadol Nyuon). The key here is that representation is a main driver to respectfully challenge beliefs and attitudes through role modelling, example setting and storytelling. The more a society, organisation or workplace commits to enhancing and embracing cultural diversity, the richer their teams and people will be.

I remain hopeful that, as time progresses, people of colour in the western world will continue to be represented and thus experience less barriers relative to those of the dominate race. Indeed, the landscape here is changing, however, gradually. I will endeavour to continue to speak up, educate and lead by example to stand up for the importance of cultural diversity in the workplace and in society.



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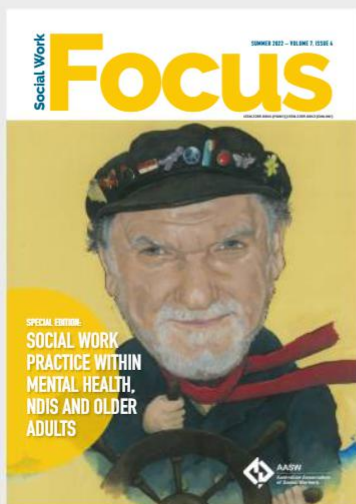
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Supplying Artwork

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

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

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

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

2023 SWF Deadline Dates

Issue	Booking Deadline	Publication
Autumn 2023	28 January	4 May
Winter 2023	29 April	3 June
Spring 2023	29 July	2 September
Summer 2023	28 October	2 December