



AASW
Australian Association of Social Workers
Annual General Meeting,
Monday 10th November 2008
Crystal Palace Room, Luna Park
Sydney

The meeting opened at 5.30pm AEDST and a quorum was established. 76 members were in attendance as per attendance list.

The meeting was chaired by Professor Bob Lonne, National President of AASW. Professor Lonne noted that two additional motions (number 3 and 4 on the Agenda circulated at the AGM) had been included on the Agenda following the Notice of Meeting being distributed. Professor Lonne advised that this situation had occurred as a result of the annual audit of AASW accounts.

Members noted the amended Agenda.

Apologies

Professor Lonne noted that there were four apologies: Roslyn Loader; A Hudspeth (Life Member); Tooba Purvez; and Dorothy Scott.

Proxies

Professor Lonne advised the meeting that there were forty eight (48) proxies. Forty (40) of these proxies were held by the Chair; 1 held by the President of the New South Wales Branch; 1 by an AASW Board Member; 1 by Glenda Bawden; 1 by AASW Board Member (J Calleja); 3 by the Acting CEO of AASW and 1 by Sue Cumming.

1. Motion One: That the Minutes of the AGM held on 16th November 2007 be accepted.

Professor Lonne put the motion to the meeting and the motion was passed by a large majority with four (4) abstentions.

2. Motion Two: That the Audited Statement of Accounts and Reports for the Financial year 2007/08 be accepted.

Professor Lonne put the motion to the meeting and the motion was passed by a large majority with three (3) abstentions.

3. Motion Three: That the directors of the Board as elected by the membership to commence appointment on 1st October 2008, be confirmed.

Professor Lonne advised the meeting that this motion was largely symbolic as there is no requirement under the Corporations Act for the appointment of directors to be approved by the AGM. Professor Lonne noted that AASW has traditionally requested

members at AGM's to confirm the appointment of directors. Given the symbolic significance of the AGM vote, the Board has elected to continue with this motion.

Professor Lonne invited the AASW Directors to the stage and introduced them to the membership. The 2008/09 AASW Directors and their terms of office are as follows:

Name	Position	Duration of Appointment
Bob Lonne	National President	3 years
Joe Calleja	National Vice President	2 years
Vittorio Cintio	National Vice President	1 year
Jill Garratt	Director	2 years
Donnie Martin	Director	2 years
Brian Wooller	Director	2 years
Naomi Spencer	Director	1 year
Sue Nesham	Director	1 year
Marie-Claire Cheron-Sauer	Director	1 year

Professor Lonne put the motion to the meeting; the motion was passed unanimously and with acclamation. Professor Lonne paid tribute to the retiring members of the Board. He spoke of their magnificent contribution made by all in various key aspects of the Association's work. He thanked the retiring AASW Board members, noting Sheryl Hateley's outstanding work in leading the review and reworking of the AASW Constitution which was passed by members at a Special General Meeting in May

4. Motion Four: That Ascent Pty Ltd be appointed auditors for the company for the 2008-2009 financial year.

Professor Lonne put the motion to the meeting and the motion was passed.

Professor Lonne advised the meeting that votes were not recorded for Motions Three and Four, as the proxies given had been allocated in ignorance of these motions. The meeting remained quorate for the entire duration, even discounting the proxy votes for Motions Three and Four.

5. President's Report

Professor Lonne noted that he had prepared a written President's Report and would use this opportunity to share some information with members.

Financial position of AASW

Professor Lonne advised that the Association had delivered a very solid result to members, particularly in light of the history of the organisation when in 2003-2004 the Association had come within \$10,000 of insolvency. AASW had only survived due to its name and reputation. Since that time significant surpluses have been recorded but at a cost. The cost of AASW surpluses has been borne by volunteers work.

At the end of 2007, the AASW Board reviewed the financial strategy of holding upwards of \$2 million in cash deposits in AASW's nominated banking institution. After due consideration of a range of options identified by financial consultants to the AASW

Board, including the purchase of property, the AASW Board decided to add to the \$200,000 already held by managed trusts in blue chip investments by \$1 million.

As a result of the current global financial crisis the value of these shares has significantly dropped, resulting in a diminished surplus of \$150,000 as at 30 June 2008.

The AASW Board has reviewed this strategy and determined that the Association is asset rich and that the original decision to increase investments in managed trust was to be a long term strategy, there is no reason at this time for the current AASW Board to sell the Association's current share holding. Any loss for the Association's share portfolio will only be realized on the selling of the shares.

In 2007/08, a \$30,000 surplus on the recurrent budget has been achieved. During the past year significant monies have been spent on the constitutional review and a further \$250,000 has been expended on critical infrastructure, projects and one off programs including:

Web Design and IT upgrade

The AASW Board approved a further upgrade of the website at a cost of \$70,000. This upgrade will enhance members' opportunities to engage with and participate in the work of the Association; including the capacity to vote online, purchase services and pay membership fees online.

Raising the profile of social work

\$50,000 has been allocated to raise the profile of social work. AASW is seeking dollar for dollar investment from Schools of Social Work and major employers to entice school leavers and others entering university education to consider social work as an option. The AASW Board views this as a critical initiative due to the ageing nature of the social work workforce. The development of recruitment materials including marketing materials will contribute to the development of a national workforce strategy. A proportion of this investment will be allocated to undertaking in-depth market research and to seeking to have social work named as a national skill shortage by the Australian Government.

2008 AASW Constitutional Review

Professor Lonnie highlighted the work achieved by the process of constitutional review. In undertaking this process, the AASW Board had the opportunity to analyse trends of membership engagement and to establish constitutional and governance mechanisms to align the organisation with the needs of members.

As a result of the review of the constitution and the changes made, a number of Boards of Practice have been established to encourage member participation and involvement. Currently three (3) Boards of Practice have been identified; however it is the intention of the AASW Board to grow the number of these Boards over time. Currently the three (3) Boards of Practice under consideration are:

- Clinical Practice
- Rural and Remote
- Child Protection

Professor Lonne advised the meeting that twenty percent (20%) of the membership had taken part in the national election and with the website upgrade this should increase in coming years.

Professor Lonne went on to advise the meeting that AASW needs to diversify its income, particularly due to the ageing nature of the membership base. Since 2005, when membership monies totaled \$2.1 million, in 2008 membership monies account for \$3.4 million of the Association's income, meaning that less than seventy percent (70%) of the Association's income is dependent on membership monies.

Professor Lonne indicated to the meeting that he wished to highlight some key achievements of the Association and the National Committees responsible for advancing this work.

National Social Policy Committee

Professor Lonne noted the excellent work of this committee in representing and advocating on behalf of AASW and members. During the course of 2008, twelve (12) submissions have been lodged with State and Federal inquiries including to: NSW Woods Inquiry; Qld Child Safety Inquiry; Two Housing Affordability Senate Inquiries; Homelessness Green Paper consultation; National Child Protection Framework consultation; Mental Health and Disability Employment Inquiry; Regional and Remote inquiry; Northern Territory Mandatory reporting of Domestic Violence Inquiries and consultation processes; and Response to the Northern Territory Emergency Review inquiry.

International Qualifications Committee

Continue to undertake important work for the Association and international members, including keeping up to date with rapid changes to the social work workforce.

National Mental Health Committee

The Committee has undertaken significant negotiations with the Australian Government for the Association in relation to better access to Medicare Benefits for social work mental health professionals. Currently a national review of the scheme is underway, with social workers being portrayed in a positive light, with data showing that psychologists are the most costly part of the scheme.

National Ethics Committee

This committee is responsible for upholding and implementing the AASW Code of Ethics, including the development of a brand new system which will no longer rely on volunteers to make up ethics panels.

National Registration Committee

Professor Lonne advised the meeting that towards the end of 2007, the Association met with the Hon Tony Abbott MP, Minister for Health who indicated that the major review of health registration being undertaken by the Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA) was likely to offer some opportunities for the social work profession to seek national registration.

Since the outcome of the 2007 election and the election of the Rudd Government, AASW has sought further meetings with DoHA. The Association has been told that as social work is not a 'health' profession within the narrow definition of 'health' and does not effect physical harm, it is unlikely that social work will achieve national registration. Indeed under this interpretation of the 'health' and physical harm, it is unlikely that psychologists would achieve registration if they seeking registration under the current system.

One possible way forward would be to seek national registration with Community and Social Service Ministers (CSD) through CoAG processes. However international counterparts have advised the AASW that members should be wary of getting what they ask for.

The National Registration Committee will be meeting for a two day face to face meeting after the conference in order to consider these developments and determine an appropriate way forward.

National Research Committee

This Committee has been established and delivering support for research of relevance to the AASW.

National Education Committee

Professor Lonne acknowledged the work of Sue Maywald in finalising AASW Education and accreditation standards and conveyed the thanks of AASW to her.

General remarks

Professor Lonne noted that it is important to acknowledge that the numbers of students enrolling in social work courses is not increasing, with the result that the overall supply of social workers is decreasing. There is no indication that students enrolling for undergraduate degrees are considering social work as an option. The Masters Degree is currently being viewed as a valid option for those seeking a career change and as a result is putting pressure on the four year undergraduate degree.

The debate regarding generic versus specialist degrees continues and will be a burning topic, particularly as the Association and the broader community tackles the issue of expanding child safety, wellbeing and protection workforce numbers.

Professor Lonne informed the meeting that currently the Association only has 300 student members, which when viewed in light of the 6,000 student enrolments across Australia, suggests that further work needs to be undertaken to make AASW attractive to this group. He acknowledged that financial considerations for students will always be a barrier to them joining and participating in professional associations.

Professor Lonne highlighted an interesting fact to the meeting: Generally the community has a perception that social work graduates are young things with minimal life experience. In fact most graduates are 29 compared to the average age of 24 for other professions.

Announcement of the AASW CEO

Professor Lonne informed the meeting that he was very pleased to be able to announce that following the advertisement of the CEO role and a merit selection process, the AASW Board had approved the Selection Committee's recommendation that Ms Kandie Allen-Kelly be formally appointed CEO.

Professor Lonne noted that Ms Allen-Kelly had a long association with AASW and most members would be well aware of her extensive work history and achievements.

The meeting welcomed the announcement with a round of applause and cheers for Ms Allen-Kelly.

Concluding remarks

Professor Lonne noted that there were a host of issues confronting the profession and that AASW had been hitting some runs and doing well in a number of ways. He noted that life is about managing and getting most things right most of the time. Professor Lonne highlighted that AASW's communication was improving and would continue to do so.

He expressed the heartfelt thanks of the Association to departing AASW Board Members:

Cecile Roberts
Pam Trotman
Sheryl Hateley
Brian Dunn
Helen Hopper

Jane Thomson – Vice President
Jose Abalo
Raelene Tabor
Sue King

Professor Lonne thanked those members who had voted for him for another three (3) year Presidential term. He noted that whilst the result was pleasing, he would not contest a further election for two reasons: the role was exhausting; and it was not appropriate for one person to hold such a position for too long.

Professor Lonne reiterated that the AASW election process had been very democratic and that regardless of where members resided there were opportunities for all to hold senior leadership positions.

Professor Lonne introduced the AASW Branch Presidents present:

Victoria: Glenda Bawden
Qld: Sue Cumming

South Australia: Sue King
Tasmania: Ann Hughes

6. Questions on Notice

1. When will the AASW actively seek a raise in the Medicare Rebate for social workers in private practice?
2. Will the AASW also approach the private health insurance companies to cover us? We are at a real disadvantage in relation to psychologists even when we are much more trained and experienced.

The AASW National Mental Health Committee is focused on these issues and is working with DoHA on these issues. In addition further policies are being developed and an additional \$1 million contract funding has been secured from DoHA.

Currently the AASW National Mental Health Committee is comprised of eight (8) or nine (9) members. The issue of private health insurance companies is a good issue; however this has not been a focus for the committee at this time.

Arguments have been raised with DoHA regarding fees versus recommended fees and the tensions these cause in the community.

3. It seems that no recognition is given on a state or national level to social workers such as myself who are "private practitioners" working outside of the 'mental health practitioner' role: Given that there is a distinct shortage of staffing in the community service sector and that the likelihood of workers like myself (who undertake short term contract work (using our own billing numbers) to not for profit community service organisations) will grow in numbers, when will my state and / or national branch create networking / support opportunities for 'other' private practitioners so that we do not operate in such a vacuum.

The AASW is establishing a number of practice groups and given the growing trend of private practitioners from 11% in 2005 to over 14% in 2008, a fundamental shift in however services are delivered is occurring.

The AASW will be working on practice groups as the AASW Board is aware that this is an area of need however as ever the issue of resources will determine how quickly this progress.

4. I have been a financial member since 1974 and was once on the SA Branch from 1974. The question of registration has been constantly raised. Why haven't we able to registered? Where are the blockages from other professional groups (if any)? We need registration for professional recognition and professional clout.

The AASW is no longer convinced that registration will give us more clout or more status. What registration will do is to increase protection for public and formal government recognition to raise professional and practice standards. The UK put the issue of social work firmly on the government agenda in order to achieve registration.

5. What are the intentions re lifting the profile of social workers, specifically in relation to mental health accreditation, our ability to 'do therapy' and other generalist duties?

The profile of social work is central to AASW plans moving ahead. The AASW Board knows that it needs to happen and should be done in partnership with other professions.

Professor Lonne called for questions from the floor.

As there were no questions Professor Lonne closed the meeting at 6.16pm.