



THE ACT SOCIAL WORKER

The official word from the Australian Association of Social Workers ACT Branch - February 2009

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2009 Committee of Management

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Jessica Dunn

President's Letter

Joanna Zubrzycki

Dear Members,
I hope that this edition of our local Branch newsletter finds you all well and safe. As I write this letter some fires are still raging in Victoria and every morning brings more heartbreaking news of the rising death toll from these terrible fires. In addition the floods have only just started to recede in North Queensland. I know that many social workers have now been sent to provide disaster recovery support to these affected communities. It is also possible that some of our interstate colleagues may also be dealing with the loss of their own communities, loved ones and homes. Our thoughts are with them now. In Canberra many of our social work community know only too well what it takes to rebuild lives and neighbourhoods and to do so with hope, dignity and humanity. Our profession has much to contribute to this area of practice.

In this first newsletter of the year we have prepared brief profiles of our current committee of management. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated group of local social workers who bring a great mix of social work experience to our COM. Please do not hesitate to contact any COM member to share with them your ideas about what we can do to support your practice in the ACT. So far this year some of our plans include:

The on-line supervision register. Please see details about this new exciting initiative in this newsletter. We have already had a lot of local interest in the register and it is great to have it now available as a resource for our members.

Continuation of our popular monthly **Rose Garden seminar series**, with more seminars to be held at a new Southside venue (to be announced). All

members are encouraged to participate in this series and to send in suggestions to our Branch Coordinator Jessica Dunn for areas of practice that they want covered. A calendar of events has been included in this newsletter. Please refer to it for details regarding the following events:

World Social Work Day (17th March 2009) event is being organised at ACU. We would like to combine this event with a "Welcome to Canberra" drinks for the new UK social workers who have arrived in Canberra as part of the recent OCYFS recruitment drive and a fundraiser for the Red Cross Bushfire appeal. Chris Healy a social work bushfire recovery expert will be our guest speaker. We will also be welcoming new AASW members and social work students on this very special day.

Annual social work dinner to be held in May (date to be finalised). Stay tuned for more details regarding this very popular annual event.

Branch ethics groups (BEG) activities. The new role of the local branches in promoting ethical practice opens up some exciting possibilities for our Branch. Michel Hansen is our BEG representative. Please contact Michel if you would like to get involved in new initiatives that promote ethical practice. We are planning to run an all day workshop on personal and professional boundaries issues in practice later in the year.

I hope that you are able to participate in some of these activities and I look forward to hearing from members regarding new suggestions. Your energy and ideas are always welcome. In the meantime take good care

Warm regards
Joanna

Across Australia, the AASW has ten local branches which are responsible for developing and promoting the strategic objectives of the Association.

These branches, such as the ACT, are administered by their respective Committee of Management (CoM). The CoM has a variety of objectives which include, to promote, coordinate, and facilitate participation in national initiatives; to facilitate regular and effective communications with members, and to provide a range of continuing professional education (CPE) activities.

In carrying out its duties, the CoM aims to reflect the broader ideals of the Association. Some of these include; the promotion of social justice; the monitoring of ethical standards; the emphasis on professional development and advocating for the enhanced recognition of social work as a profession.

The CoM for 2009 have extensive experience in the field of social work and are committed to the growth of the ACT Branch. To learn more about our CoM, keep reading...

JOANNA ZUBRZYCKI

I am currently the President of the AASW branch. My involvement with the Branch has been a long one and has included taking on the role of convenor of the Branch Ethics Committee. I arrived in Canberra in 1995 as a lecturer in social work at the ACU School of Social Work and yes I am still there! I am passionate about social work education and practice and am very proud to be part of the strong and vibrant Canberra social work community. Some of my practice and research interests include: working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, working with Indigenous communities, professional supervision, reflective practice, the use of self in social work, and ethics in social work, in particular personal and professional boundary issues in practice.

PATRICK McAVOY

I Graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work from University of Melbourne in 1992 and have worked in various frontline positions in HIV/AIDS, Disability and the complex role of being a 'Guardian' in NSW. I have several years experience working as a Policy Officer specialising in disability and homelessness in the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services (as it was known in that incarnation). In 1999, I graduated from the University of Sydney with a Masters of Social Work (Merit) and thoroughly enjoyed my return to study, especially the challenges and learning's gained as a result - even though it was intense studying and working full time. I am currently employed as a Social Worker based at Canberra Hospital and am attached to the Radiation Oncology Department – I commenced in ACT Health in August 2007. I served as Vice President last year and look forward to representing members in 2009.

As a person who has vast experience in frontline social work, working in social justice and policy and as a person with a mild physical disability, I have been invited to do seminar presentations and educational sessions on a wide range of issues relating to disability awareness and social justice. These have served to enable and empower people with disabilities, and their carers, to maximise their quality of life. This this is a real passion of mine.

MICHEL HANSEN

Hi all, I am Michel Hansen and I was on a Disability Pension for 20 years. In 2001 I went to TAFE in Albury NSW to do a Business Administration course. In 2002 I went to Latrobe University in Wodonga.

I did 2 years of the Bachelor of Arts degree and I then transferred to the 2 year Graduate Entry Bachelor of Social Work degree and graduated on 21 April 2006.

In June 2006 I took a 4 week locum position at Calvary Hospital. On 24 July 2006 I commenced at Care and Protections Services in Care Orders and in December 2006 moved to Appraisals which is now the Response and Intervention Team. I really enjoy my work in Care and Protection and right now I would not work anywhere else.

I am single and enjoying life. I was unable to have children, but I am proud to say I have 5 "Surrogate" kids who I absolutely adore. They are Skye (12) and Hayley (8), Hayley (25), Catherine (12) and Matthew (11).

I love spending time with them and I am a real home body. I enjoy going to Bingo with my mother and spend hours "arguing" with my father. I have lost 40kgs in 12 months and with 20kgs to go. I am so proud of myself for losing weight and successfully returning to the work force.

I am enjoying my time on the ACT Branch Committee of Management and would like to work towards continuing the great work the committee has and will be doing.

HELEN HOPPER

My name is Helen Hopper and I am an ACT Branch Management Committee member. I have been a member for three years. I hold a Bachelor of Arts (Social Welfare), a Bachelor of Social Work and a Masters of Public Administration. I am currently employed with the ACT Government as Team Leader for a Multidisciplinary Team working with school age children who have a developmental delay and/or developmental disability and their families. Over many years I have worked in the areas of Aged Care, People with Disabilities and their families and Child Protection both in rural NSW and ACT.

I represented the ACT AASW Branch on the AASW Board of Management for 12 months. During that time I have had portfolio responsibilities on the AASW Board for Social Policy, Mental Health, Education and Field Education. I am on the National Social Policy Committee and National Mental Health Committee.

Working with some of the most disadvantaged groups in the community I believe that the AASW should be the collective voice of social workers in responding to injustice. As a social worker I want my professional association to be active and lobby both Federal and State Governments on social justice issues. This year I would like to work with members to find out what you would like from the ACT Branch.

SATNAM SINGH

Currently working as Senior Manager within the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support. Satnam is responsible for the Client Services area consisting of Adoption and Permanent Care, Integrated Assessment and Therapy services, Family Engagement Unit and Out of Home Care Placements

I am a qualified as a social worker in the United Kingdom and has worked for many years within the field of adoptions and fostering, initially with Barnardo's Scotland where I set up a specialist service for Black and Minority ethnic children. This service won the National Community Care award for innovative practice in 2001. I worked for 10 years with the Open University in Scotland as a social work lecturer and am a qualified practice teacher. I have also worked as a Consultant for the British Association for Adoption and Fostering.

For a number of years I worked as an independent trainer, consultant and researcher. I have a portfolio of research and publications.

I have professional interests in Out of Home Care, Adoption and Permanency as well ant-racist and anti-oppressive practices in child care.

PETA FITZGIBBON

Peta has more than thirty years of experience as a social work practitioner, lecturer and a senior manager working for many years as a social worker in the Department of Social Security, a senior manager in both Centrelink and the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Peta's areas of experience included National Management positions within Social Work, Youth programs and services, Workforce Participation and social and community recovery.

Since leaving the Australian Public Service, Peta has worked in India with a human rights Non-Government sector and back in Australia as a strategic adviser within a regional community services organisation in the ACT.

Most recently she is working in Centrelink managing an innovative Place Based Services Program aimed at providing more integrated service delivery within disadvantaged communities. In 2008 Peta was a sessional lecturer at the School of Social Work at the Australian Catholic University in Canberra and will continue some teaching in 2009.

Peta has maintained an active role in the Australian Association of Social Workers for many years, serving on the Board and Committees in Tasmania and the ACT. While currently on the ACT Branch Committee of Management, she also is a member of the National Social Policy Committee of the AASW. Her social work areas of interest and experience have included child welfare, youth homelessness and family support, social policy development particularly income support and poverty alleviating, welfare reform and service delivery innovation.

PATRICIA JOHNSON

My background is in teaching, and I have had experience in primary, secondary and adult education. I spent many years in Pastoral Care. In 2002 I enrolled in the Social Work Degree course at Australian Catholic University and graduated in 2004. For the four years following I worked in child protection, in teams that investigated reports, in teams that worked with families to address the abuse and endeavoured to assist families to move on in their lives. In November of 2007 I took up a position at the Gungahlin Child and Family Centre, as an outreach child protection worker. It was a new position created by the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support. The aim was to encourage low risk families in the child protection system to access the service at the centre and to know there was assistance close at hand when a crisis arose. It goes without saying that I was the person that was educated the most over those four years.

I am currently a school chaplain-social worker in two primary schools, where I assist students, parents and teachers in times of loss and grief and other daily circumstances. Last year I organised a loss and grief course for the students as well as a transition course for students leaving Year 6 and entering High School. In 2009, I also established a breakfast club in one of the schools. My hope is that I will expand the activities begun in 2009, and intend to work with Marymead with the Kid's Connect program as well as exploring the possibility of introducing some parenting courses during this year.

WENDY ROLLINS

Wendy has extensive practice experience gained from working in a wide range of contexts including Federal, state and local governments and the non-government sector in Victoria and Queensland, as well as the ACT. Her main area of focus has been working with children and families. Wendy has also had a continuing interest and involvement in the field education of social work students in Victoria and the ACT. Wendy is now employed teaching at the ACU in the School of Social Work as well as being a member of the Committee of the ACT Branch of the AASW

JESSICA DUNN - Branch Coordinator

I am currently studying B Arts/B Social Work at both ANU and ACU. This year, I am full-time at ACU and will be completing course work and placement components. In addition to my studies, I work part-time for Centacare as a youth support worker in a residential mental health program. I'm passionate about working with young people, and have a particular interest in harm minimisation practices.

Since November, I've worked with the AASW ACT Branch in the role of Branch Coordinator. My key responsibility is to provide administrative support to the CoM and assist with member enquiries. I'm enjoying my time in this role and look forward to watching our branch projects grow and develop. In 2009, I hope we can increase our student member base, while continue to provide a range of services to our members.



Australian Association of Social Workers
ACT Branch Supervision Register



The Supervision Register is a database of fully accredited AASW members, who provide private supervision to AASW members. Based partly on the Victoria Branch's Supervision Register, the ACT register will be the third established AASW register in Australia.

The ACT Supervision Register is an offline, secure database system where members will be able to seek out information and contact details of accredited supervisors who are offering supervision.

If you are a fully accredited AASW member who provides supervision services in the ACT, please consider requesting placement on the register. For a one-off administrative fee of \$30, supervisors will join the register and their contact details will be made available to interested members. The benefits of registration include:

- **A higher profile for supervisors**
- **The promotion of supervision**
- **An easily accessible service for supervisors and members**
- **The opportunity to meet local members within our community**

For members seeking supervision, the register allows you to choose a supervisor with whom you may share similar professional interests or areas of practice expertise.

For more information and registration forms,:

Please visit the ACT AASW website -<http://www.aasw.asn.au/about/branches/act.htm>

Or

Email the Branch Co-ordinator - aaswact@asw.asn.au

We look forward to building this register and providing more services for our members.

This month, we are featuring a synopsis of a research project conducted by Julia Friedewald. This project examines the profile or image of social work as an occupation, from the eyes of social work students and the mass media. The findings are very insightful and further assist us to understand how our profession is perceived in wider contexts. Now, over to Julia...

As part of my final student placement I designed a research project that examined the profile or image of social work. While at first I will admit I did not grasp the relevance of this topic once I commenced the project it soon became clear to me just how important the image of social work is for maintaining the vitality of the profession. My project consisted of two separate components, or sub-projects. The first component involved conducting student interviews with the intention of building an understanding of the reasons why students have chosen to study social work, based on their perceptions of the profession, and identify aspects of social work that they deem less attractive as these are important considerations for recruitment, which was a key focus of my study. The second component was a news media review was aimed at collecting and analysing news media reports related to social work.

Eleven final year students from the Australian Catholic University in Canberra participated in the interviews. One of the outstanding themes that quickly surfaced in the thematic analysis was that the participants believed that a major reason that people choose to pursue social work as a career is to help others and make a positive difference to their lives. All of the participants identified this as a key reason why people choose to study social work. Participants described this aspect of the profession as providing a high level of personal satisfaction:

'[One of the best things about social work] is the personal satisfaction you get from knowing that you are making a difference to people's lives. It's a job you can enjoy and you don't mind going to work everyday.'

Participants also believed that the variety of the work was one of social work's best qualities:

'[One of the best things about social work is] the breadth of opportunities in terms of the different contexts social workers can work in such as individual work, community development or policy work.'

However, many participants felt that there was little understanding of the diversity within social work and of the type of work social workers are involved in generally. Some participants felt that this lack of understanding served as an obstacle for recruitment into the profession.

Participants generally felt that social work was either little known or perceived in negative terms. Many thought that social work was considered 'low status' and that this may contribute to an image of social work as an undesirable career choice:

'...social work doesn't get any 'kudos' as in, it's not seen as high status. People...think that [social workers] don't know what they're doing. I think they see psychology as more professional, with more specialist knowledge and as more employable.'

Participants also identified the risk of burnout or the perception of social work as stressful and emotionally taxing work as a potential disincentive to pursuing social work as a career.

'The stressful work environment that comes from working with other people's problems might be [a reason people choose not to do social work]. People have a perception that social work is likely to lead to burnout.'

But by far the most commonly identified factor that may discourage people from pursuing social work that was identified by all the participants was low pay. It is important to note that one demographic group in particular, those aged between 36 and 45 years of age expressed deep concerns about the issue of low pay. These concerns seemed to centre on being able to support their families:

'I think about what sort of organisation I would work for. For instance, in the community sector the pay is bad and at my point in life that is a real issue. I have three kids and my partner works in the community sector so he doesn't get paid well. I am considering at this stage not working as a social worker when I graduate.'

Younger participants also expressed concerns about low wages, in comparison to other industries especially given that they were entering the work force with a HECS debt. However, most agreed that it was not enough to stop them from pursuing social work:

'When I told my dad I wanted to do social work his first reaction was: 'Are you sure? You know you won't get paid well'...Even though dad warned me, I didn't care. As long as I have enough to live off it wouldn't stop me, because that's what I wanted to do.'

Finally, many participants confessed that they had very little understanding of the role of the AASW and felt that the Association was not very prominent in the public arena:

'I'm not really aware of what the AASW does. I mean you see the code of ethics and practice standards, but apart from that...'

Despite this, all of the participants agreed that the AASW had a role in promoting the profile of social work. Ideas about how this should be achieved were wide ranging and are reflected in the recommendations of my report.

A more detailed summary of the project is set to be published in the upcoming edition of the *National Bulletin* and hopefully the full research report will soon be available on the AASW Website.



RSVP for catering purposes to
Jessica Dunn at aaswact@asw.asn.au

ROSE GARDEN SEMINARS 2009

A joint initiative of the ACU
School of Social Work and
ACT AASW Branch

<p>Tuesday MARCH 17th 5:30pm Room: S3</p>	<p align="center">Social Work Day BBQ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome to Canberra for UK Office of Child Youth and Family Services social workers, and • The social work role in bushfire recovery. Speaker: Chris Healy. School of Social Work PhD student and former Director of the Canberra Bushfire Recovery Centre <p>In light of the tragic Victorian Bushfires, we will be holding a fundraiser on this night to help support the affected survivors, families and communities. Please bring your friends, colleagues and family members.</p>
<p>Monday APRIL 20th 5:15pm Room: S3</p>	<p align="center">The Influence of Field Placement on Social Work Graduate's Perceptions of Preparedness for Practice. Speaker: ACU Honours Graduate - Krystal Carter.</p>
<p>TBA MAY</p>	<p align="center">Annual Social Work Day Dinner. Our biggest Social Work Event of the year. Keep watching for further details next month.</p>
<p>Monday JUNE 15th 5:15pm Room: S3</p>	<p align="center">Social Work and the Ecological Crisis Speaker: Marie Jamieson</p>

All of the above seminars are being held at the ACU Campus—223 Antill St, Watson

The ACT AASW Branch would love to hear from you,

- Are there particular topics or areas of interest you would like to see covered?
- Do you have suggestions for future Rose Garden Seminars?

If so, please contact the branch—aaswact@asw.asn.au.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Postcards from the Field, is a regular column of *The ACT Social Worker*, where fellow social workers provide us with a glimpse into their daily working lives. This month, **Kate Haughey**, a recent ACU Social Work Graduate, has kindly volunteered some time to discuss her current work projects, and her reflections on practicing in the field.

Family life can be very challenging for parents and children when there is a family member experiencing a mental illness, whether or not the illness is clinically diagnosed. Whilst families want to provide the best help they can for their ill parent or child, the experience can place enormous stress on other family members.

I work at Marymead in the Horizons program which provides support, counselling and connections for families where one member of the family has a mental illness and at least one child is aged between 0 – 8 years. This program aims to help improve the quality of the relationships within families and to those who want assistance with the following:

- To better manage family relationships, issues and problems;
- Keeping up with the daily demands of home and family;
- To understand the effect of mental illness upon children;
- To develop a greater understanding about mental illness;
- To develop a greater understanding about other services available in the ACT.

Sometimes people just need someone to talk to or to feel understood, and want support with how to help the family.

As a recent social work graduate, working in this program has given me the opportunity to move from the 'classroom' to the 'field'. With support from peers and through weekly supervision, I have experienced working from all levels of a systems perspective and the impact my own values and beliefs have on my practice.

My work includes direct practice with families, trying to build on the family's existing skills and capacities, and assisting the family to gain access to community services. I have begun to appreciate the importance of professional reading, particularly validated research, to help influence my work but also influence possible policy changes that affect this client group. With my other team members, I presented at the 'Practice Talking' conference held at ACU last October.

My social work journey has only just begun, it has been everything I thought it would be, challenging yet very rewarding!

Our thanks to Kate for submitting this article. We would love to hear from a range of members for our *Postcards from the Field* section. Would you like to update us with any current areas of research or practice? Do you have new reflections or insights to share? If you would like to share your experiences in the field, please contact -

aawact@aasw.asn.au

FEBRUARY 23RD**From Local to Global: Using the UN to Achieve Local Change for Women (for community workers)**

Contact the YWCA on natoffice@ywca.org.au

Cost: Free

MARCH 24TH

Workshop: Understanding and Effectively Responding to Clients with Borderline, Antisocial and Narcissistic Personality Disorders

Presenter: Prof James Ogloff

Venue: Crowne Plaza (Canberra)

Further info: Sally Lane, PPL Education Services. Ph: 02 6628 2901

Email: sally@ppleducation.com.au

Website: www.ppleducation.com.au

MARCH 5-7**The Heart & Practice of Child Centered Play Therapy I Workshop & Post Graduate Certificate of Clinical Play Therapy Course**

This workshop & training program focuses on Child Centered Play Therapy, a form of counselling or psychotherapy for children from 3-10 years old.

For full course & workshop details, please

visit www.playtherapyaustralia.com or phone 08 9433 2288

Giving an Account of Ourselves: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Philosophy, Knowledge and View

This seminar series is the first at AIATSIS to be delivered solely by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. From all around Australia, the speakers will consider a range of issues surrounding what it is to be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in today's society. We are talking and writing ourselves in this series. By acknowledging our intellectual heritage and strength of our society, this seminar series is also a celebratory expression of our collective 'I', Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

For more information on seminars and upcoming dates, please visit http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research_program/events2/seminar_series_1_2009 or please contact: Cressida Fforde cressida.fforde@aiatsis.gov.au

Position Vacant: Counselling Coordinator - Canberra Rape Crisis Centre.

Canberra Rape Crisis Centre (CRCC) is a non-government organisation working collaboratively within service provision systems in the ACT and surrounding areas to provide services and programs to people and communities affected by sexual violence. We provide a 24/7 crisis line, Indigenous community support, counselling to victims and their families, and community education programs. CRCC is seeking an experienced Counselling Coordinator to supervise and support our team of Counsellors and Crisis Team members.

For further information please phone 6247 8071 or email crcc@rapecrisis.org.au to obtain a recruitment package.

If you haven't had the chance to visit the Horizon Career Centre, now is the time to do so!

Horizon is an AASW career hub used to find and advertise jobs in the human service sector. It also has a range of career services which are available to all AASW members.

So what are you waiting for? Check it out today!



Horizon Career Centre
Employment Solutions for Human Services
www.horizonemployment.com.au 1300 73 13 14