

ACT Branch Management Committee President's Report 2018

We begin by acknowledging that we are meeting on the land of the Ngunnawal People, the traditional owners and ongoing custodians of the lands of Canberra. We pay our respects to the elders past and present, their ancestors and their families.

Firstly, I want to thank you all for attending our Annual Members Meeting which has come around so quickly after a very busy year in the ACT Branch.

We have been fortunate over the last twelve months to have a full Committee and to those new members who joined the Committee this time last year, I want to thank you all very much for all your hard work and dedication. I want to thank Elizabeth Moore, Janet Berger and Felicia Melillo for being on the Committee and who resigned during the year. These wonderful women gave so much to our Committee and are sadly missed. For those remaining members, thank you Helen Hopper our Vice President, Suzanne Smith, Janice Bartram, Mallika Moke, Joanna Zubrzycki, Parveen Kalliath, Georgina Tozer and Rodney Stanton for all your contributions, ideas and support.

Our Branch Manager, Alara Miller, left her position recently but I want to thank her for her assistance over the year also.

This year we have been focused on providing various events for our members including a SW Networking group in February where SW's were able to meet and share food which was a lovely relaxing get-together and network opportunity. We had planned to have more of these events, but time got the better of us this year.

We hosted a World Social Work Breakfast on World Social Work Day with former ACT Chief Minister, Jon Stanhope, who gave a tremendous speech on 'Promoting Community and Environmental Sustainability'. This was very informative, from the heart with some good advice for engaging with community. Jon is well known in the Canberra community and the Breakfast event was a great start to our day.

We provided **Practice Groups** on the following:

- Self-Care by Felicia Melillo in March
- Solution Focused Brief Therapy by Suzanne Smith in May
- Advanced Care Planning – Lessons from the Churchill Fellowship and Beyond by Joy Cocker from ACT Health in August
- Attachment Theory by Annabel Wyndham in October

We provided **Seminars** on the following:

- Mindfulness and Self Compassion by Suzanne Smith in February
- Becoming and Being Culturally Responsible by Joanna Zubrzycki and Richard Jameson in April
- The Budget by Craig Wallace from ACTCOSS in June
- False Self Presentation by David Davis in July
- Exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Work by Joanna Zubrzycki and Richard in September
- Evidence Based Practice by Debbie Plath.

This year has been a year of coming together and organising ourselves to move forward. As I have said, we had a full Committee which was such a relief having had a year in 2016/17 where there ended up with only four on the Committee. This was obviously very stressful. The Committee formed working groups to enable a quicker flow through the massive workload and those groups included a Professional Development, RAP, Communications and Social Policy sub-committees.



The ACT Branch was successful in one-off budget submissions with regards to our RAP and Communications.

The ACT Branch is committed to implementing the AASW RAP with ACT social workers and to this end we developed the sub-committee to make the goals of the RAP relevant to the branch.

Plans are to identify key Indigenous stakeholders and begin to liaise and relationship building with them; groups will include Indigenous social work students, new graduates, Indigenous social workers, ACT Indigenous agencies and Indigenous communities so we can understand their culture and their needs. We would also like to develop CPD initiatives that are Indigenous specific to build capacity in working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people especially around the IAHA Cultural Responsiveness in Action Framework that covers six key capabilities of Centrality of Culture, Self-Awareness, Proactivity, Leadership, Inclusive Engagement and Accountability and Responsibility.

This plan meets the following areas of the AASW Strategic Plan 2018/21 by being a strong voice for social justice by understand Indigenous issues in the ACT, to build professional capacity of the ACT members through building knowledge around working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and to advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work through implementing the RAP strategies in the ACT and understand and acknowledge their ways of knowing, being and doing.

We are currently developing our communication channels out to members and looking to provide events to where our members are and catering to what are members are looking for. We are also commencing our collaboration with NSW Branch to look at joint events. We plan to expand our professional development and networking groups and opportunities over the next twelve months, if re-elected. We met through the year with the Financial Manager from the National Office to ensure we have within Budget and our requirements financially for the year ahead.

The Branch also met with Debra Parnell on the National social policy strategy to discuss how the ACT Branch could feed into that and be active on the social policy issues that impact our area and are of importance to our local communities.

In other news ACT membership over the year saw a steady 2% increase – with our membership at 30 June comprising 68% practising social workers; 14% new graduates and 10% student members. Of our practising members, 41 are Accredited Mental Health Social Workers.

Consistent with our interstate colleagues' members join the ACT Branch to develop their networks and connections, access to professional development, to be kept up to date with issues impacting the profession, and access to publications. Again, this was shown in the Member Needs and Satisfaction study undertaken in March this year.

But on a more exciting note, I am very pleased to announce a particular membership – an **Honorary Life Membership** to Emeritus Professor Maev O'Collins awarded at the AASW AGM in Perth on Friday 9th November by our National President Christine Craik.

Maev's career in Social Work has been devoted to the development of the social work profession in Australia and internationally. Maeve began her social work career in 1952 as a Community Development Worker for the Melbourne based Catholic Family Welfare Bureau. She went on to undertake her Doctor of Social Welfare at Columbia University, graduating in 1972.

Her long and distinguished social work career has encompassed child and family welfare, academia and international aid and development. Her role as Professor in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Papua Guinea challenged Maeve to establish new social work and welfare programs that prepared graduates to work with complex social issues often in very remote locations in the PNG Highlands.



Her expertise in cross cultural social work and welfare practice was often tested as she sought to develop new educational programs within colonial, institutional contexts. Maeve went on to utilise this valuable experience in her work in a range of aid projects, including training Peace Keepers in the Solomon Islands.

In retirement, Maeve has devoted herself to the development of the social work course at the Australian Catholic University. This has involved membership of School Advisory committees, being a member of Course Review Committees and AASW Accreditation Panels, undertaking the supervision of PhD students, teaching and mentoring students and presenting at conferences. Most recently (in 2017) Maeve provided financial support to the University for the establishment a scholarship to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work students.

Maeve is not here tonight unfortunately, but we have a lovely award to give to her and the ACT Branch will organise an event to give this to her in the very near future.

In conclusion I want to welcome your ideas and assistance if you are interested in joining our Committee or supporting the Committee over the year. Please come forward and talk with us at any time and any support you can offer will be very welcome. I want to wish the new Committee every success for the year ahead in promoting Social Work connection and development of the important issues for members in the year ahead.

Many thanks,

Kate Soulsby
ACT Branch President
15 November 2018