



## Social Workers congratulate new Government

The AASW looks forward to working with the ALP minority Government on a range of issues important to social workers and their clients.

The AASW is pleased that it can continue its ongoing discussions with Minister Roxon on a range of health, ageing and mental health policy issues; specifically the exclusion of social workers from the Medicare funded Better Access to mental health initiative, the role of social workers in the Government's health reform agenda and ensuring that social workers are part of all health workforce initiatives.

In the May 2010 Federal budget the Government decided to remove social workers from the Better Access to Mental Health Initiative. The decision was not evidence based, was made without consultation and before the Review of the program, due later this year, had been completed. After a vigorous community campaign the date for implementation of any changes was postponed to April 2011.

“The Minister for Mental Health and Ageing, Mark Butler, conceded in a radio interview on Monday that there are ongoing discussions between the AASW and the Minister for Health, Nicola Roxon, and we are still hopeful that the Government will recognise the valuable role social workers play in mental health services through Medicare and reverse the decision to exclude them from Better Access (Medicare funded) mental health services,” said **AASW CEO Kandie Allen-Kelly**.

“The Government’s continuing failure to address the unjustified removal of social workers from Better Access is a huge concern for social workers and their clients. Many clients, particularly those in rural and remote parts of Australia, and those on low incomes, are unable to afford access to other mental health professionals and will therefore receive no treatment after April,” said **AASW President Professor Bob Lonne**.

The AASW is also delighted that it can continue to work with Minister Macklin, who has been instrumental in driving the introduction of the first national child protection framework. Social Workers strongly support a robust national framework and believe that a national workforce strategy is an essential component, to ensure the best possible services to vulnerable children and their families.

The AASW is also concerned that income management be appropriately focused towards the very small number of recipients of income support likely to benefit from it, those who have volunteered to participate. The AASW sees a key role for Centrelink social workers in the processes for including and excluding families from income management. The AASW remains convinced that income management is best delivered when voluntary, either at the individual or community level.