

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

16 July 2012

*For immediate release*

### **Staff who Abused Victorian DHS Clients may still be working with People with Disabilities**

Social Workers are concerned that the Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS) staff who were sacked for assault and other inappropriate behaviour are potentially still working with disabled and vulnerable people. Though no longer employed at DHS they may well have found employment at one of the many other agencies that provide disability services in Victoria.

If the staff involved had been nurses, physios, psychologists or a range of other professionals, DHS would have been obliged to notify their national registration body and they may have had a range of penalties imposed on their work. Their poor practice would be declared on a public website and so would be known to any future employer and thus ensure appropriate protection of the public.

While The Age has not named professions, the Sun Herald (7-7-12) reported that 'Last year three social workers from the Department of Human Services were caught assaulting clients...'

It is not clear from reports if the staff involved were professional qualified social workers. Given that social workers are not registered, non-professionally qualified workers can currently be given that label without redress. The lack of registration means that clients are potentially left exposed to dangerous staff who move from one employer to another when their behaviour is discovered potentially exposing vulnerable people to further abuse.

"It is not adequate that DHS simply reported these matters to the Victorian police. Governments need to agree to include social work in the national registration and accreditation scheme so that vulnerable Victorians are better protected from negligent practice by social workers," **said AASW Registration Campaign Manager Kandie Allen-Kelly.**

The AASW is [campaigning now](#) for social work to be included in the national registration scheme alongside other professions. This would put the profession on the same footing as nurses, pharmacists, physios and other professions and so better protect vulnerable people. The public expects social workers to be registered and accountable to a government agency.

**Glenys Wilkinson, AASW CEO** said "the AASW is convinced that these atrocious acts will continue to be perpetrated and done using the name of social worker while the profession remains unregistered."

Fourteen health professions are covered in the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS). Social workers are by far the largest group of health professionals who have not been considered for inclusion.

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