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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Social workers achieve positive first step towards entry into National Registration and Accreditation Scheme

Social Workers welcome the decision of the Australian Health Ministers, Standing Committee on Health (SCoH) Meeting in Perth on Friday, to refer the national registration of social workers to the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council (AHMAC) for due consideration against the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) criteria.

While the AASW hoped that the council would provide direction to AHMAC to carry out a Regulation Impact Statement, the AASW remains committed to working with AHMAC and the state and territory health ministers to demonstrate the quality and safety and workforce imperatives for registering social workers.

Professor Karen Healy, National President of the AASW said *"The AASW vision for registration over several decades is strongly supported by our members. We thank Minister Hames for his leadership in taking this to the council and we welcome the opportunity to more fully brief the AHMAC members about this important quality and safety issue"*.

AHMAC will begin a process whose long term outcome it is hoped will be to provide the 500,000 Australians who receive assistance from social workers each year, with some protection.

AASW Registration Spokesperson, Kandie Allen-Kelly said, *"It is a credit to the federal, state and territory health ministers that they have listened and responded to the concerns of the AASW; concerns which were supported by the Australian Consumers Health Forum, Australian Council of Social Services and Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health as well as many NGO employers and others."*

Social Workers have worked alongside doctors and nurses in Australian hospitals since the 1920s and were the first university qualified professionals other than doctors in Australia.

Social work is the largest or in some states, second largest, public sector allied health profession.

*"21,000 social workers are more than able to self-fund registration infrastructure, being much larger than several of the professions currently registered under NRAS"*, noted AASW CEO Glenys Wilkinson.

Social Work is the only mental health profession not registered under the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

Support for registration of social workers is growing as demonstrated by 4,500 people signing a petition supporting the registration of social workers in a 4.5 week period. The petition can be viewed and signed at <http://www.communityrun.org/petitions/register-australian-social-workers-to-protect-vulnerable-australians>

The AASW congratulates and thanks its members and colleagues for the efforts in lobbying MPs and health ministers to achieve this fantastic first step in the campaign for National Registration.

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