



AASW

Australian Association
of Social Workers

Registration and Title Protection in Australia

*Past, Present and Future.
Professor Karen Healy, National President AASW,
Address to SWRB Conference
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In Australia, Social Work is a Self-Regulating Profession

AASW responsible for:

Educational standards

Ethical Standards

Practice Standards

Also responsible for IQA, Accredited Mental Health Practitioners.

Social policy and advocacy



The problem

Vulnerability associated with reliance on a single voluntary Association.

Registration and Title Protection

- Registration refers to government involvement in defining and monitoring professional standards including the implementation of sanctions for professional misconduct.
- Title protection: reservation of a professional title for a specified group of practitioners.

Why it matters:

- Public Safety
- Professional Quality
- Professional Accountability and Recognition



Challenges to registration and title protection in Australia

- Despite social work registration now commonplace in many comparable countries, in Australia the following barriers exist.
- Limited development of legal structures to regulate individual professions
- Australian governments' commitment to an “open marketplace” and reluctance to regulate a range of professions
- Diversity of the Community Services Sector



Three strategies: NRAS Inclusion (Strategy One)

National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. Established in 2010

- Core objective to provide a National Registration Scheme for already registered professions. Initially only 10 professions, now 14, but a large number of professions are excluded (such as social work).

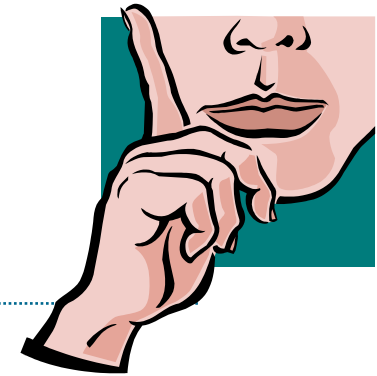
Advantages:

- clarifies our scope of practice
- protects educational standards (decreases our profession's vulnerability)
- access to benefits

Disadvantages:

- Costs
- Questions regarding coverage across diverse practice contexts





Current Situation with NRAS

- AASW referred for inclusion in current review of NRAS
- On August 1 2013, a National Code of Conduct proposed to address public safety issues for unregistered health professions
Health Ministers and Policy Makers reluctant to extend the NRAS scheme citing:
 - a) costs
 - b) political opposition to extensive involvement in professional standard setting and regulation
 - c) existing coverage is sufficient to achieve public safetyHowever, unease exists about the large number of professions functioning outside professional regulation.

Collective Trademark (Strategy 2)



- We have applied for and achieved a collective trademark For exclusive use by AASW members.

The trademark is the AASW Logo with an R and then accompanied by approved set of words, eg. 'accredited social worker'.

Advantages

1. Proven Strategy
2. Relevant to diverse domains of practice
3. Employer interest

Disadvantages

1. Promoting brand recognition
2. Challenging infringements of the brand.

Authorised self-regulation (Strategy 3)

- Collaboration with other self-regulating health and community service professions in the National Alliance of Self Regulating Health Professions
- Proposing a model for representation and regulation of health professions that is recognised by government

Advantages

1. The professions in this network are committed to a similar high level of educational and professional standards
2. Strength in our unity

Disadvantages

1. Representation/ governance issues need clarification
2. Government recognition requires clarification.

To the Future

- Will continue with all three strategies
- A fourth possibility is to seek individual legislation for social workers
- Our multi-pronged approach has yielded solid results and a good foundation for continued advancement of professional registration and title protection.

