

## *MEDIA RELEASE – 04.06.2014*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Concerns for hospital patients after Centrelink community team services reduced in hospitals**

The AASW Victorian Branch is concerned about recent changes at Centrelink which prevent social workers directly contacting the Centrelink Community Teams on behalf of patients with complex needs.

Mr David Maxwell, President of the AASW Victorian Branch said “The role of the Community Team has been redefined and they are no longer accepting enquiries from social workers working with people with complex health and social needs unless they are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This new slimmed down version of the service is rarely used and the clients in hospital, usually following an emergency, miss out on much needed Centrelink advocacy,” Mr Maxwell said.

“Social workers are often on the phone for long periods of time using the 132717 number which is an enormous waste of valuable professional time.”

Hospital patients requiring professional social work assistance are often at risk of inadequate housing, breakdown in income support, disrupted family connections and employment continuity being at risk, as a result of serious illness or trauma. Ease of contact with Centrelink by a professional social worker is vital to resolving these issues.

The AASW represents 7500 professional social work members, many of whom work in the hospital setting. The inconvenience and distress caused to their clients is of major concern to the AASW.

For exclusive interview requests with Professor Karen Healy or one of our professional social work members, please contact our media officer on the number below.

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**Media Contact:**

Laura Edwards  
Media and Communications Officer  
P: (02) 6232 3911 or 0400 613 516

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