Welcome to our final issue of Social Work Connect for 2016. As we are writing this, Glenda Kerridge, one of our Co-editors as well as the President of the Victorian Branch of the AASW, is having a wonderful time in New York, taking part in the Mount Sinai Department of Social Work Services International Enhancement of Leadership Program at the Mount Sinai Medical Centre. We plan to report more on her reflections about this exciting opportunity in our next issue.

2016 marks the 70th anniversary of the AASW as well as of VCOSS – two organisations that address social issues and drive change. The origins of social (welfare) work in a less formalised context are, of course, much older. Travellers Aid, a Melbourne-based not-for-profit organisation, for example was founded 100 years ago, a milestone worth celebrating. Strong influential women with foresight and determination were instrumental in establishing both the AASW and Travellers Aid. And we still encounter women like them today – Jan Watson was one of them, a distinguished social worker and a continuous member of the AASW for fifty-one years!

Philip Mendes’ fascinating reflection on the history of the AASW and abortion policy highlights the involvement of social work in not only addressing social issues but playing an active part in driving policy change. This active involvement is today as important as ever – in a number of policy areas, including more global issues such as the many people who flee from war and persecution. Australia has started to take in some selected refugees from Syria and Iraq, and Australian social workers are amongst those who are helping them to settle in this country.

In this issue, we present the new members of the Victorian Branch Management Committee, Helen Woods, Chris Barrett and Lorraine Xavier-Ambrosius. They fill the roles left by Ilia Vurteil, Bernie Chatley and Scott Williams and we would like to acknowledge the many years of hard work these three have provided to the Victorian Branch. We also introduce Claudia Bidstrup, who is currently completing her social work placement at the Melbourne office of the AASW.

Furthermore, we showcase some of the fabulous sessions that have been provided by practice groups and by the Victorian branch – sessions to inform and support students and new graduates, the upcoming pilot program for mentoring newer social workers and the sessions run by the Barwon Region Social Work Directors’ Group.

We plan to report more on her reflections about this exciting opportunity in our next issue.

Maria Groner
Lisa Derham and Glenda Kerridge
Helen Woods recently joined the Victorian BMC recognising the valuable need for all members to make their contribution to the ongoing growth and development of our professional organisation. She believes that the AASW has a responsibility to articulate and promote knowledge and skills central to our practice regardless of our metropolitan or rural location.

Graduating from Monash (BSW) in 1987 and University of Melbourne (MSW) in 1994, Helen’s clinical practice has been predominantly within the health and community sector and more specifically within the field of disability with roles at Austin Hospital, Vision Australia (formerly RVIB) and Western Health. Current areas of interest include mindfulness, narrative theory and trauma-informed practice.

Helen formed Melbourne Supervision, a private practice, in 2003 with a focus on providing external clinical social work supervision to individuals and teams across Melbourne and rural Victoria. In addition, she holds sessional teaching contracts at Monash, Deakin and RMIT universities facilitating student learning in counselling and multidisciplinary skills.

Her practice also includes a role of disability advocate. As a disability advocate, she is employed privately by a client living with MS. The role has required developing a model of service beyond the mainstream but equally requires skills and knowledge to navigate the service system. This work in particular has required close understanding of NDIS developments.

Helen has been a long-time member of the AASW, now ANHHSV and is committed to our professional association. The context of her current social work practice continues to be informed by the principles, values and ethics of the AASW.

She is a member of:
- Progressive Neurological Social Work Group
- AASW Individual Funding Practice Group
- MHPN Port Phillip Group
- MHPN Psycho-oncology Group
- MHPN Workplace Bullying Group and recently,
- Barwon Region Social Work Practice Group BRSWPG

Chris Barrett is a school social worker. Her recent research includes Young Men Speak: a study of mid-adolescence and masculinity (MSW) and School Social Work in the State of Victoria, Australia: 65 years of student wellbeing and learning support (PhD).

For many years Chris worked as a teacher-social worker in secondary schools, then joined a community agency to develop a youth counselling and outreach program. She returned to student support in the state education system, where among a variety of approaches in a broad generalist and school-specific specialist role, she has coordinated a school social work student unit across a network of primary schools. Chris has been involved in private supervision, consulting, counselling and professional writing.

Chris has presented many practitioner workshops and several papers at US and other international school social work conferences. She was a keynote speaker at the Sixth International School Social Workers Conference in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, in 2015. She co-convenes the School Social Work Practice Group, and facilitates its Peer Supervision Sub-Group. Chris has had a significant role in writing the first AASW Practice Standards for School Social Workers, and participated in their recent update. She has presented workshops for the AASW Victorian Branch CPD program.

Chris is especially interested in social justice and social worker professional identity, specialist social worker professional identity; and critical practice with children, and young people marginalised in an adult-dominated world.

Lorraine Xavier-Ambrosius holds a BSW and MSW and brings more than 20 years of professional experience in clinical, management, and professional practice as well as project management and leadership roles. Lorraine is the Clinical Operations Leader at Alfred Hospital Social Work Department and more recently in 2015, a scholar of the prestigious Mount Sinai International Social Work Leadership Program.

Her career expands across social work practice in Singapore for five years, and upon migration, two years in the community sector of disability and homelessness, followed by majority of her career/ expertise spent in the healthcare sector including: Department of Health and Human Services and various hospital networks. Lorraine feels very fortunate to have worked in a variety of countries and domains that allow her to have a broader understanding of the experience of social workers and the implications of ongoing changes in social work practice.

As a member of the AASW, Lorraine believes strongly in the association’s mission and values and is looking forward to working with the association to promote and strengthen social work’s professional identity.
The Victorian AASW and the Abortion Debate: Some Historical Reflection

Written by Philip Mendes

Abortion policy continues to polarise the community. In November 2015, Victorian pro-choice advocates secured a major victory when the government finally introduced a buffer zone law to prevent anti-abortion protesters harassing women entering the major birth control clinic in the Melbourne CBD. But the anti-abortion advocates have not given up as reflected in the unsuccessful May 2016 proposal by Democratic Labour Party MP Rachel Carling-Jenkins via the Infant Viability Bill to criminalise any abortions performed on women more than 24 weeks pregnant.

Abortion has also long been a polarising topic even for the social work profession. In the late 1960s the Victorian Branch of the AASW was actively drawn into the controversial public debate which eventually led to Justice Menhennitt’s famous May 1969 ruling effectively legalising abortion (Haigh 2008).

The AASW convened a well-attended public forum in July 1968 which was addressed by speakers from medical, legal and social work perspectives. A follow-up meeting held in August 1968 voted on whether the existing law should be changed either to permit abortion due to broader socio-economic factors, or alternatively on request by women. Both votes were tied. Consequently, an Abortion Study Group was established to canvass the views of the Branch membership, and prepare a public statement on abortion. The group was concerned to end the public silence of the social work profession on this issue, but equally wary of adopting a firm policy statement that would alienate members with alternate views (AASW 1968).

The Study Group released their statement in May 1969 which endorsed the liberalisation of abortion law. The statement identified the limitations of the existing abortion law noting that it ‘was inconsistent with the attitudes and practices of many members of the community’. Particular concerns included the widespread practice of illegal abortion, and the associated suffering and negative medical and social consequences (AASW 1969a, p.9).

The statement concluded that, ‘Some women will continue to seek abortions and in certain circumstances it appears both a preferable and humane alternative for the community to offer. For those desiring an abortion it would reduce the social and psychological problems and it would remove the criminal status from otherwise law abiding and conscientious citizens. Legalised abortion would not entirely eliminate the problem of the medically unqualified aboritionist, however, it would almost certainly reduce the extent of this practice.

This study group considers some reform of abortion law in Victoria to be long overdue’ (AASW 1969a, p.10).

The AASW’s statement provoked considerable interest in the media, and was widely reported in The Age, Australian and Herald. The latter published eight paragraphs presenting the key arguments canvassed by the AASW in favour of abortion law reform (Anon 1969a). Similarly, The Age identified the AASW as one of a number of groups ‘pressuring the State Government for liberalisation of the abortion laws’ (Anon 1969b).

This media coverage appeared to embarrass the AASW Executive which had not planned media engagement, and subsequently voted to ‘meet with representatives of the Press to discuss the matter of unsought publicity’ (AASW 1969b, p.4).

The media coverage also provoked significant dissent from some members of the AASW opposed to the statement. Two of these members, Elizabeth Sharpe and Father Eric Perkins, wrote a firm letter to the Executive outlining their objections. They argued that on contentious issues such as abortion the AASW should not adopt an official policy and instead remain neutral. Their letter suggested that ‘the determination by the Association of a particular policy in matters not confined to social work and upon which members may be divided by their political allegiance, their philosophy of life their religious, ethical or moral principles could lead to some members being required to make a choice between their membership in an Association with this particular policy, and principles, allegiances or convictions which they deem to be more fundamental and important to them and which are in conflict with the declared policy of the Association’ (AASW 1969b, p.6).

This dissenting statement appears to have had little long-term influence within the AASW which was increasingly influenced by feminist and pro-choice perspectives. This tradition of Australian social workers supporting abortion rights was also reflected more recently in the strong stand adopted by the Queensland Branch of the AASW in favour of the decriminalisation of abortion in the Sunshine state. Citing fundamental principles of human rights and social justice, the Branch argued in a June 2016 submission to the Inquiry into Abortion Law Reform and laws governing termination of pregnancy in Queensland that law reform is essential to ensure that all women in Queensland have access to safe termination services, and specifically to protect the reproductive rights of particularly vulnerable groups of women such as the homeless and those escaping family violence (Hardy 2016).

References

About the Author
Associate Professor Philip Mendes is the Director of the Social Inclusion and Social Policy Research Unit in the Department of Social Work at Monash University, and most recently the author of a third edition of Australia’s Welfare Wars to be published by UNSW Press in February 2017.
NAVIGATING SOCIAL WORK IN AUSTRALIA

WRITTEN BY JOHNSON MATHEW

On 27 July 2016 the Victorian Branch hosted a very successful seminar on Navigating Social Work in Australia. The target group was international social work students, new graduates and overseas trained social workers who are new to the Australian social work context. This seminar was able to offer:

- Information about the services offered by the AASW International Qualifications and Assessment Team with regard to recognition of Overseas Qualifications, Migrations Skills Assessment and AASW Eligibility;
- Insights into the social work landscape in Australia with regard to key employers, sectors, fields of practice;
- Advice on key attributes and skills sought by employers;
- Insights into the journeys of international social work students, new graduates and overseas trained social workers who have successfully navigated their way into social work in Australia; and
- Opportunities to interact with panelists and peers with a view to sharing experiences and seeking advice about opportunities in Australia and beyond.

The seminar took the form of a Panel Presentation followed by a Question and Answer Session. Our panel comprised Glenda Lapsley - a representative of the AASW International Qualifications Assessment Team (IQA), Bruce Hart – a Senior Manager of Professional Standards at the AASW who has extensive experience in the recruitment and employment of new social workers and myself, Johnson Mathew, a Victorian Branch Management Committee Member and employee of Barwon Health with overseas social work qualifications and experience in successfully navigating the IQA process.

The thirty-two participants who attended the event came from sixteen different countries - five participants from Australia (16%), seven participants from China (22%), two participants from the Philippines (6%) and one participant from each of the following countries - Colombia, Ethiopia, Hong Kong, India, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, South Korea, Spain, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Turkey, and Zimbabwe. This surely was a real mix of participants from various backgrounds and great to see such an interest for social work from various countries. The overall feedback we received for the program was very positive and gave participants a good insight into social work in Australia and the process involved and supports available. Participants identified some of the most useful aspects of the session as the opportunity to ask questions and get clarifications, the mock job interview and tips about job interviews, information about the language requirements of the assessment process, understanding of different fields of social work practice, pathways to job-seeking, personal experience shared on IQA process and support, various web links and information about the qualifications assessment. I would also like to thank all participants, panel and AASW staff for all your support and contribution in making this a great experience.

This program gave us an insight into some of the challenges faced by international students and social workers in Australia. This program was offered as part of Victorian Branch three-part Student and New Graduate Seminar Series.

For more details about upcoming events for students and new graduates or any of our Continuing Professional Development opportunities please contact the AASW Victorian Branch.
PREPARING FOR YOUR FIRST SOCIAL WORK ROLE

WRITTEN BY CLAUDIA BIDSTRUP

Social work students spend years immersed in the theory and values of our profession before having to suddenly navigate the very practical tasks of job searching as new graduates. On the evening of 28 September this year, over twenty undergraduate and postgraduate social work students came together at the AASW Melbourne Office to learn from the experiences of a diverse panel of five local practitioners. Students and panelists shared hot drinks and finger food and after an Acknowledgement of Country, sat to hear about formally entering the social work profession.

The panellists represented both the great scope of practice available in social work and the potential to thrive for decades in our profession, with sixty-eight years of combined field experience. The seminar was coordinated by Branch Management Committee (BMC) student member and sustainability activist Despina Filippaki and led by BMC member and senior clinical community and primary care social worker, Johnson Mathew, who described the event as contributing to generational quality in our field. The event traced Melissa Braden’s path from probation placement to specialist offender program management, Laurenza Buglisi’s experience from adult and youth offender work to sexual abuse counselling and advocacy, Lisa Derham’s journey from AOD program design to private counselling and supervision, Elyce Sandri’s road from court locum to family violence casework, and Michael Splawa-Neyman’s experience from child protection to clinical hospital social work management.

Social workers at all stages practice with complexity and the first formal role can bring great challenges and opportunities at once. A key first role lesson for the panellists was the importance of supervision and support which were described as both organisational and personal responsibilities. Panellists spoke candidly about identity development in the first role which often involves a transition to professional schedules and times of self-doubt. Panellists also shared their experiences around the evolving application of skills and theory that can involve pressure to complete administrative tasks and to know it all as well as the opportunity to use theory creatively in practice.

To prepare for and succeed in a first social work role, students were encouraged to balance support mechanisms with strategic research and learning. Panellists emphasised the importance of supervision and support through seeking feedback and establishing early self-care routines. Students can prepare strategically for their first social work roles by having field placements in a desired field, practicing for interviews and seeking feedback, researching the role and tailoring resumes. Students were encouraged to seek broad experience before specialisation and to turn on the ‘enquiry mind’ and view their careers as a learning trajectory.

Participants shared their fears, dreams, and ideals ranging from the availability of jobs to the importance of organisational values. Panellists encouraged students to research and clarify organisational values, read job descriptions creatively and positively, and be aware of the space for work created by ongoing government reforms. New workers should see their career paths as learning processes that involve maximising feedback, seeking learning opportunities and networking. Panellists advocated for honest skills promotion and the need to balance confidence with expertise both to develop the rigour of our work and to protect the welfare of the human beings at the core of our practice.

At the end of the night participants said the most useful discussions involved the practical advice, practice realities, and diversity of experience. The Preparing for Your First Social Work Role event demonstrated the sense of community and knowledge available within our field, with practitioners across a broad range of settings and stages joining together with the next wave of social workers to share knowledge and support.

...the evolving application of skills and theory...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Claudia Bidstrup is an Honours student from Monash University completing her qualifying placement in social policy and advocacy with the Victorian Branch. She is writing a thesis on the relationship between social work and community development and is passionate about professional identity, social work history and theory, and macro change.
SELF-CARE FOR STUDENTS AND NEW GRADUATES WORKSHOP

WRITTEN BY DESPINA FILIPPAKI

In the past year the Victorian Branch of the AASW has run a series of Students and New Graduates events. On Wednesday 24 August the Victorian Branch hosted its first self-care workshop for students and new graduates. The workshop was facilitated by Martine Langoulant of Full Circle Conversations.

Martine is an accredited member of the AASW and has 28 years of social work experience. The focus of her work today is informed by her history of working in both government and non-government organisations. Martine currently delivers worker self-care workshops and other training across New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania to workers from a range of government departments and non-government organisations.

Self-awareness, assessment and self-care are critical to prevent an unhealthy and, too often, toxic build-up of stress from the sometimes invasive effects of our work. Martine’s workshop provided an opportunity to reflect on developing and maintaining personal resilience and sustainable workplace practices. Martine introduced the concepts of self-care, compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma and burnout and their cognitive, emotional, behavioral, spiritual and somatic symptoms. Participants were asked to reflect on their own experiences and how defining the above can help them to understand the contributing factors that lead to compassion fatigue, vicarious trauma or burnout. This led to a fruitful discussion around personal and organisational resilience strategies.

At the end of the event, Martine highlighted the importance of timely and good quality external supervision, especially for social workers who find themselves as the only social worker in their workplace. Organisations and their policies play a key role in creating a healthy environment for workers and we reflected on strategies to invite other colleagues into meaningful discussions around group and peer supervision and how to collectively advocate for our wellbeing.

This workshop provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on their own organisation’s policies and workplace culture. Students and new graduates were invited to reflect on the determinants of employee wellness and the significance of supportive and flexible managers. Martine’s workshop provided students and new graduates with a wealth of information and feedback that they were excited with the information and support they received.

“A very effective workshop”

“Very practical, positive, relevant … a great presenter”

“We have only lightly touched upon this at university so thank you for the opportunity to attend this event before graduating”.

For more self-care resources, please visit Martine’s website at http://fullcircleconversations.com/

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Despina Filippaki is an environmental activist with a background in teaching and linguistics. She is currently completing her Honours at RMIT exploring Indigenous economic policies and concepts of “slow violence”. She convenes the Green Social Work practice group in Victoria and is a student member in the Victorian Branch Management Committee.

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To view what you’ve enrolled in or to participate in a networking group
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The courses are structured in segments so you can fit them into your schedule and come back later. There’s no time limit. They include videos, recordings and integrated series and are presented by local social workers and international visiting academics and practitioners.

These are just some of the courses available on SWOT and we are adding new ones all the time.

Responding to disclosures of sexual assault
Delivered by Sarah McGregor, a social worker with a wealth of experience in the area, this course will assist you to develop skills and greater knowledge in responding to disclosures of sexual assault. CPD hours: 2

Mental health, depression, suicide and substance abuse
Delivered by Bryan Jeffreys, a registered psychiatric nurse, this course examines key topics in mental health – neurochemistry, depression, suicide and substance abuse. CPD hours: 15

Getting the most out of child protection planning meetings
Delivered by Dr Helen Buckley of Trinity College Dublin, this course explores how to set up a case planning meeting. Discussion also takes place around the meeting, including awareness of interagency issues and differing perspectives, parental attendance and more. CPD hours: 1

Talking with children – an overview for social workers
Delivered by Dr Deb Ables, this online training will assist professionals to build skills and strategies for talking effectively with children and young people. CPD hours: 2

Working with family violence and violence against women
Delivered by Marianne Ibrahim, a social worker who has extensive experience in working with survivors and perpetrator of family violence, this introductory course will assist practitioners in understanding the complexities surrounding family violence and violence against women. CPD hours: 2

Managing a successful private practice – Part 1
Delivered by Doug Burke, a highly experienced Accredited Mental Health Social Worker and private practitioner, this course covers the in-depth process of setting up and running a private social work practice. CPD hours: 4
IDENTITY FORMATION IN EARLY CAREER SOCIAL WORK – CONNECTING OUR NEW GRADUATES WITH OUR PROFESSION

WRITTEN BY LAURENZA BUGLISI

In 2015 the AASW Victorian Branch delivered a five part seminar series ‘Preparing for your Career in Social Work’, providing students and new graduates with the necessary information, resources, and support to better equip them to commence their social work careers. Post-workshop evaluations identified the ‘Connecting with a Mentor’ evening to be particularly successful, suggesting high interest levels in future mentoring opportunities. Feedback provided from both mentors and mentees indicated that an extended mentoring program would better facilitate mentoring relationships and assist new graduates to feel a sense of connection and belonging to our profession. The Victorian Branch Management Committee recognised the importance of supporting early career social workers in this transition period and agreed to undertake a pilot program in 2016. The Early Career Social Work Mentoring Pilot aims to provide new social workers who are currently employed with the opportunity to be paired with a senior social worker for the purpose of facilitating identity formation and career development. Mentees are expected to be AASW members who have been working in a social work role for between one to three years. Mentors will be AASW Accredited Social Workers with more than seven years’ experience in direct social work practice. This pilot also hopes to serve as a means for senior practitioners to contribute to our profession through the transfer of tacit knowledge and practice wisdom. Mentors will not be paid for their participation in the pilot as it is recognised as a voluntary contribution to the AASW and our profession in general. Both mentors and mentees, however, can accrue CPD hours according to the time invested in the program.

The Mentoring Pilot will run for approximately six months and will commence with an Orientation to Mentoring Workshop which will be held on 22 November in Melbourne. Mentors and mentees will be responsible for coordinating individual meetings between themselves during the pilot, however it is expected that this will occur at least once per month. Participants will then come together in mid-2017 for a Reflection and Networking Event to conclude the program. It is hoped that due to the flexibility of the independently arranged mentoring sessions (which could be available via phone or Skype), that this pilot will appeal to social workers in rural and remote areas, as well as those in metropolitan areas.

This pilot also draws on recent research by Professor Karen Healy and Dr. Gai Harrison (Forging an Identity as a Newly Qualified Worker in the Non-government Community Services Sector, 2015) which found that the identities of new graduates were often influenced by a combination of personal, professional, and organisational factors rather than profession. Professor Healy and Dr. Harrison suggested that future research was needed to explore how these identities evolve over time, however, they recommended that new graduates be provided with the tools to negotiate their professional identity in the context of occupational instability and job change. This research also highlighted that aligning with professional values and identifying with others was a crucial part of professional identity formation. It is anticipated that the mentoring pilot could serve as a means to connect early career social workers with the profession itself and enhance a sense of belonging to a wider community outside the realms of the organisation within which they are employed.

Applications for the 2016 Program have now closed. If you are interested in future mentoring programs, please make contact with the Victorian Branch.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Laurenza Buglisi has been a social worker for seven years and currently works at SECASA, providing sexual assault and family violence counselling to children and adults. She has also completed a Masters of Family Therapy and previously worked with adult offenders and young people who have engaged in sexually harmful behaviour. Laurenza has been on the AASW Victorian Branch Management Committee for three years and is particularly interested in supporting new graduates as they transition from university to the workplace.

...an extended mentoring program would better facilitate mentoring relationships and assist new graduates to feel a sense of connection and belonging to our profession.

THE LYRA TAYLOR FUND

CALL FOR 2017 GRANT PROPOSALS

The Lyra Taylor Fund was established by the Victorian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers and is administered for the following purposes:

1. To advance education in relation to Social Work by:
   - Promoting, improving and maintaining standards of professional practice, education and research;
   - Establishing and maintaining continuing professional education opportunities for members;
   - Educating and informing the public and community institutions as to the aims and objectives of professional Social Work.

2. To encourage and financially support special projects that will benefit the community.

GRANTS

Grants from the fund may be made to Members of the AASW (Vic Branch) for projects consistent with the Fund purposes.

The Lyra Taylor Fund Committee will make up to $7,000 available for distribution and, as of 1 December 2016, is calling for proposals for grants to be utilised in 2017.

Shortly, prospective applicants will be able to access grant guidelines and application forms via the Victorian Branch section of the AASW website. Please also feel welcome to contact the Victorian Branch office on 03 9320 1012 or via email on aaswvic@aasw.asn.au for more information.

The closing date for applications is Wednesday 1 March 2017
Travellers Aid Australia, a community service organisation founded 1916 as the Travellers Aid Society of Victoria, has just celebrated its 100th anniversary.

Long before social work became an established profession, social welfare work was provided by individuals and increasingly by formally established organisations and ‘societies’. Often the wives of well-known politicians and businessmen were involved in establishing and supporting these organisations. Lady Helen Munro Ferguson, the wife of the then Australian Governor-General, back in the days when Melbourne was the capital of Australia, founded the Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society in 1914 and two years later presided over the meeting at which the Travellers Aid Society of Victoria was founded.

The Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) had established a Travellers Aid department a few years after its own formation in 1882, out of concern for young unmarried women making their way around Melbourne. Working closely with other organisations, the department grew quickly, which led to the formation of a separate organisation in 1916. The main aim remained the support and protection of women and children arriving in Melbourne – at first from regional Victoria in search for employment and better opportunities, later also from overseas during and after the Second World War.

Although initially the women involved in conducting the work of Travellers Aid did not have a social work qualification, they certainly did the work that nowadays qualified social workers and other professionals take on.

With social (and moral) welfare in mind, Travellers Aid volunteers met women and children arriving in Melbourne at Spencer Street Station and later at the docks and connected them to accommodation, employment and health and social services. Travellers Aid volunteers were well-connected to railway and harbour authorities, the police, hospitals and the range of organisations who initially founded the society, employing means that are still widely used within social work contexts such as networking, case management, crisis intervention and community development.

Over the 100 years of its existence, Travellers Aid has continuously adapted to the changing needs of society and those
travellers who have arrived in Melbourne from a range of origins and for a range of reasons.

Whether a woman came to Melbourne to escape her violent husband, arrived from Britain as part of the Victorian government public servant scheme after the First World War, as a refugee during or after a war or as a war bride after the Second World War, Travellers Aid was there to look after her and connect her to employment, accommodation and supports.

Women travelling from the country to access medical treatment were accompanied to the hospital where needed. Major outbreaks of disease such as the Spanish Flu in 1918-1919 and polio in the 1930’s resulted in travel restrictions, and Travellers Aid provided assistance to the women and children who became stranded in Melbourne. Until the 1960’s many rural hospitals refused to treat Indigenous people which meant that many Indigenous people had to travel to Melbourne for treatment. Travellers Aid provided accommodation and support to the families arriving from rural Victoria.

In the 1980’s, deinstitutionalisation of people with disabilities resulted in a significant influx of individuals with disabilities requiring assistance frequenting the city. Travellers Aid responded to this need by providing accessible toilet facilities as well as personal care attendants to help with meals and toileting.

From the 1970’s, Travellers Aid started to provide services to men as well. Homelessness, substance abuse and mental health issues have been the main issues Travellers Aid staff and volunteers have encountered while providing travel-related emergency relief, mostly in form of travel vouchers to get someone home or to a place of support.

One hundred years on, Travellers Aid is going strong, still relevant and as a war bride after the Second World War, Travellers Aid was there to look after her and connect her to employment, accommodation and supports.

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One hundred years on, Travellers Aid is going strong, still relevant and an important part of Victoria’s social welfare history.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to Alicia Cerreto and Sarah Rood from Way Back When Consulting Historians for providing the historical data.

All photos used for this article are property of Travellers Aid Australia and reproduced with permission of Travellers Aid Australia.

This was the question posed to us by Norah Hosken, who spoke with the Barwon Region Social Work Practice Group at their most recent bi-monthly event on “Social Work, Class and the Structural Violence of Poverty”.

More than 40 social workers, and social work students, from a diverse breadth of fields, including child protection, health, community services, private practice, disability and more, came to hear Norah inspire us to remember our roots as social workers; taking hold of, and living out, our values — social justice, respect for persons and professional integrity — and holding firm to our commitment to work towards the achievement and realisation of human rights, empowering and advocating for those most vulnerable and marginalised in our community.

She encouraged us not to neglect the small, day-to-day practices that can achieve systemic change in our community; validating frustrations; acknowledging and identifying systemic neglect of the poor; and challenging the introduction of managerial and neoliberal policies in our organisations. We should — indeed, we must — be constantly aware of our responsibility to do so. In 20 years, when people look back on us and our actions, where would we choose to be sitting? Would we be content sitting in the camp of history among those who compromised their values — who sat back and passively watched as the structural violence of poverty was increasingly perpetuated by systemic forces in these, “the worst of neoliberal times”?

Or would we sit with those who did not so easily give in — with those who challenged inadequate and irresponsible policies and practices, and who persistently empowered and advocated for those most vulnerable and marginalised in our community, giving them a voice in a society that tried, perhaps inadvertently, to silence them? Will we be among those who advanced the rights of others passionately, with full conviction of the inherent worth of human beings and our role in reminding those in power of their responsibility to recognise and respond effectively to the needs and voice of their people?

We’d like to publicly acknowledge Norah’s hard work in advocating powerfully for systemic change, and we greatly appreciate her generosity in freely giving over 40 social workers, and future social workers, an inspiring message to take hold of now and into the future in their professional practice.
Ethical issues in health are common and paediatric health can be particularly complicated and challenging. Parents’ rights to make medical decisions for their children are widely acknowledged. But is this always the best for the child? How do we determine the appropriateness of this widely held belief? What do we do when there is a disagreement between the treating team and parents?

“Doctors and Parents Disagree: Ethics, Paediatrics and the Zone of Parental Discretion” provides an interesting and informative look at the variety of ethical decisions facing health care professionals working in these areas. The book, divided into five parts, presents real life clinical scenarios which are familiar to a range of health professionals. This is a welcome divergence from other literature in this area, which largely focuses on the dilemmas facing paediatric doctors. Of further assistance to the reader, particularly in respect to the book’s usefulness as a teaching resource, is the division of case studies into three key ethically sensitive areas; clinicians encountering parental refusals of treatment, clinicians encountering parental requests for treatment and finally, clinicians encountering parental requests for interventions on healthy children.

The book also introduces, explains and explores an engaging concept known as “the zone of parental discretion (ZPD)”. Quoting from the book, “The ethical tool aims to balance children’s wellbeing and parents’ rights to make medical decisions for their children” and it is offered as an appropriate framework for guiding clinicians in assessing parental decision making.

ZPD re-frames the difficult and subjective concepts of “what is within the best interest of the child” and instead asks “will this decision cause probable harm?” It suggests that ZPD can be utilised in situations of entrenched disagreement, and may allow clinicians to accept parental decisions that are suboptimal for the child, so long as the decisions do not result in probable harm to the child.

The book aims to “assist doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and clinical ethics staff to deal with these ethically challenging situations”, which is exactly what it does. As a social worker within this area, I found the case scenarios allow for important ethical discussion and reflection, but perhaps of greatest benefit in the book is the very real and practical support the ZPD framework provides for clinicians working through these challenging scenarios.

About the Reviewer
Katherine Dowson is a Grade 4 Social Worker & Social Work Practice Lead Women’s and Children’s Program Eastern Health.
VICTORIAN BRANCH ANNUAL MEETING 2016

WRITTEN BY ANNEKA FARRINGTON

On Thursday 15 September 2016, members and friends of the Victorian Branch turned out in record numbers to attend the Annual Meeting at St Vincent’s Hospital, undaunted by anantarctic blast of rain and wind.

The afternoon commenced with a free workshop entitled Leading with Social Work Values and Ethics in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous World, facilitated by Dr Geraldene Mackay. Dr Mackay lead the fifty plus participants through a number of theoretical and practical exercises with a view to reinforcing the idea that ethics is central to our work as social workers and encouraging participants to consider how they might better articulate the intrinsic ethical approach of social work when promoting their practice. The workshop prompted a range of responses and reactions amongst those present and indicated that this brief workshop was but a snapshot of what could be a much more sustained conversation into the future.

This workshop reached capacity well in advance and interested members were waitlisted to attend. The Branch was heartened by the significant level of interest amongst members in the ethical dimension of professional social work and we will explore opportunities for engaging members in future workshops and reflections around this critically important topic.

Following the workshop, the Victorian Branch Management Committee hosted drinks and canapés for the assembled and ever-growing number of guests. Convenors and representatives of many of the Branch’s twelve Practice Groups were in attendance to speak about their work throughout the year and to encourage new members to join these thriving entities.

The Annual Meeting was chaired by Victorian Branch President Glenda Kerridge who invited the AASW’s new Deputy CEO Cindy Smith to address the meeting. Cindy introduced herself to Victorian members and spoke briefly about her vision for the AASW moving forward.

The audience was also fortunate to hear Bruce Hart, Senior Manager Professional Standards at the AASW, speak about the AASW’s early steps toward a credentialing program for professional social workers. This topic clearly piqued the interest of those gathered and Bruce fielded a number of pertinent and illuminating questions from members about the proposed new program.

Glenda Kerridge outlined the key achievements of the Branch over the past year including the significant increase in membership with a total of 2,343 Victorian members, representing just under a third of all Australian members, at the end of the 2015/16 Financial Year. Glenda outlined the Branch’s efforts across a range of areas including the delivery of a vibrant Continuing Professional Development Program, the support of twelve active Practice Groups, the hosting of key events and activities, participation in social policy and advocacy efforts, and the publication of Social Work Connect in its new digital format.

The highlight of the evening was the inspiring presentation by keynote speaker Mr Kot Monoah. Kot is a lawyer with Slater and Gordon and a South Sudanese community leader and spokesperson. The audience was invited to engage with Kot’s story of the incredible challenges he, his family and his community faced as a result of the deadly civil conflict that has wracked South Sudan for more than sixty years. His flight from Sudan to Ethiopia and later Kenya, and the atrocities he experienced in transit but also within the refugee camps, were harrowing indeed. Kot clearly outlined the critical challenges facing the South Sudanese community here in Victoria including the current climate in which the media continue to vilify community members, particularly South Sudanese youth, the significant and pressing issue of unemployment amongst South Sudanese youth, and discrimination that endures and negatively impacts the capacity of community members to integrate into the wider community. Kot called on social workers to seek to better understand the needs of this community and to work toward supporting individuals, families and communities to address issues of trauma, loss and disenfranchisement whilst also supporting the path to reconciliation and peace in the longer term. It was a privilege to be invited to share insights into what can only be described as a remarkable and heart-rending story of survival, persistence, determination and transformation.

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity for members to gather together to reflect on the past year and to look toward the challenges and possibilities of the year ahead. We thank our members for joining with us for the Annual Meeting and also for their engagement with and commitment to the values and the vision of the AASW. We look forward to coming together for our Annual Meeting in 2017.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Anneka Farrington is the Professional Officer of the Victorian Branch of the AASW.
HEALTH SOCIAL WORK DIRECTORS’ GROUP SYMPOSIUM 2016

WRITTEN BY MICHAEL SPLAWA-NEYMAN

The Health Social Work Directors’ Group (HSWDG) is a practice group of the Victorian Branch of the Australian Association of Social Workers. The HSWDG comprises health social work managers from across Victoria and meetings are held bi-monthly to provide educative input and to facilitate professional collaboration. This year the 7th Annual Research Symposium was hosted by Barwon Health and supported by Slater and Gordon Lawyers. The symposium was held at Geelong Hospital on 22 September.

The symposium continues to evolve and this year over 100 social workers from across Victoria attended to hear presentations from 14 speakers and to review nine research posters. The symposium organising committee, lead by Karen Todd from Barwon Health, organised four presentations from social work academics. The keynote presentation was from Dr. Sophie Goldingay from Deakin University with presentations from Professor Lynette Joubert and Professor Louise Harms, both from the University of Melbourne and with a presentation from Associate Professor Fiona McDermott from Monash University.

The audience-choice oral presentation was awarded to Kathryn Elliott from Western Health, in collaboration with Victoria University, and her presentation was titled: “The Psycho-social Wellbeing of Parents with Infants in the Special Care Nursery.”

The audience-choice poster presentation was awarded to Katherine Maywood from Eastern Health and her poster was titled: “Assessing Responses to Domestic Violence Disclosures at the Angliss Hospital.” All PowerPoint oral presentations and posters are available to download from the AASW website.

Due to the success of this symposium the research grant will be offered again in 2017 with the grant increasing to $1,000. Information regarding the grant and how to apply is available on the AASW website: https://www.aasw.asn.au/victoria/health-social-workers-directors-group

VALE JAN WATSON

WRITTEN BY CHRIS WATSON, JAN’S HUSBAND

Jan Watson (then McCormack) studied at the University of Melbourne, graduating in 1964 with B.A., DipSocStud. Her first job was with the Repatriation Hospital, working with Elizabeth Marshall, a mentor whom she greatly admired. In 1965, she married and accompanied her husband Chris Watson to Vancouver.

Returning to Melbourne in 1969, Jan worked with the Children’s Protection Society, a demanding position aggravated by difficulties with management over the professional independence of its workers.

Time in County Durham, England brought more interruptions to her professional work. Eventually she was appointed Head of Social Work at Fairfield Infectious Diseases Hospital, back in Melbourne. Jan worked with people affected by various diseases, but her major contribution came with the onset of HIV/AIDS. A senior doctor reported from the U.S.A. that a new disease was having devastating effects in the homosexual community, and urged Fairfield staff to build up links with the community in Melbourne to alert them to the threat and prepare a response. Jan was quickly involved in establishing such links. She used her connections to set up a crucial meeting, accompanied by Dr Anne Milch, with an influential group of gay men. From this flowed a pattern of ongoing cooperation with medical and other staff as well as community members, in meeting the challenge. This was a time of great fear of infection from a disease whose means of transmission were poorly understood. For example, some funeral companies were unwilling to handle the bodies of those who had died from an AIDS-related illness. Jan was active in dealing with such community fears, as well as with the patients themselves and with distraught parents and partners.

In looking for sources of spiritual support for AIDS sufferers, Jan had the best response when she turned to religious orders. Sisters Hilda and Greta were two of those who committed themselves to the care of those in need. Jan responded to the need for information with the production of A Guide through the Maze, a summary of practical advice on welfare and care options. She facilitated support groups for parents and for women who were affected by the disease.

This was very wearing, especially as extra staffing was only reluctantly provided. Eventually, there was a small department and Jan’s leadership abilities were shown in new ways. A former member praised her ability to teach her colleagues how to get things done in the face of obstructions.

Meanwhile, Fairfield Hospital’s existence was threatened and Jan took a leading part in the battle to save the hospital. When this battle was lost, she comforted those who were devastated by the closure, while feeling it so deeply herself that she decided she would not return to hospital social work. She was appointed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal, but felt too constrained by regulations which made it hard to show compassion. A few years with the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service was a potentially awkward position for somebody who had been demonstrating against the Vietnam War at the time but she established a good rapport with group members. What she now saw of the subsequent damage to veterans and their families reinforced her views that Australia should have had no part in it.

In recent years, Jan’s main professional activity was promoting and running Intensive Journal Workshops as developed by Ira Progoff. A few weeks before her cancer diagnosis, she was demonstrating in Ivanhoe on behalf of the Grandmothers against the Detention of Refugee Children, having also organised local media coverage. Since 1994, she put considerable time and energy into the restoration of a small property at Korweingubora, south of Daylesford, planting, with assistance from family members, about 2000 native trees and bushes.

At the end of 2015, feeling unwell and increasingly fatigued, Jan learned that she had ovarian cancer. Treatment with chemotherapy and surgery appeared to be successful, but new tumours appeared elsewhere and she passed away on 30 August 2016 after spending two weeks at the Mercy Hospital, and then the Olivia Newton John Centre in Heidelberg.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Splawa-Neyman is the Clinical Social Work Manager at Monash Medical Centre and Moorabbin Hospital, Monash Health and he is the Convenor of the Health Social Work Directors’ Practice Group.
Supervision
Presented by Dr Susan Lewis

This course can be distinguished from other courses as it offers comprehensive training with opportunities for hands on experience. The course brings together psychological and management theories within an experiential model. There is an emphasis on practice based knowledge and skills with the content grounded in evidence-based research and years of practice wisdom. The course is designed for practitioners with supervisory responsibilities. Participants will be able to gain knowledge of the supervisory role, build skills as supervisors, heighten understanding of process within a framework well-grounded in focusing upon forming an accurate diagnosis and understanding of treatment options. There is an emphasis on the practitioner as a tool, a tool that requires an awareness of the impact the supervisor has on the relationship with supervisees/clients, and on the need for continual growth through increased knowledge and skill development.

Meet the Presenter
Dr Susan Lewis is a social worker, family therapist and psychologist. Susan completed a masters degree with research in supervision and has practiced in a number of clinical settings. For the past 20 plus years she has worked in private practice. Dr Lewis has worked with a range of organisations as a consultant, conducted hundreds of hours of individual and group supervision/consultation and has presented on this subject for 30 years.

Who should attend
The course is suitable for practitioners who work in the Human Services sector at a managerial level who have had experience in providing supervision and for social workers and psychologists who offer supervision within their clinical practice.