

# Contributions to the building of social work knowledge in Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond

Te manu kai miro, nōna te ngahere; te manu kai mātauranga, nōna te ao.  
The bird that eats the miro berries, theirs is the forest; the bird that consumes knowledge,  
the world is theirs.

We are pleased to introduce this first issue of *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work* for 2022. In its small way, we believe the journal is one source of knowledge and sustenance for social workers. Available freely to all, the journal provides access to social workers to recent research, much of which is local and conducted by practitioners undertaking small-scale studies, alongside the contributions of academic researchers. Contributions to the journal have reported on the concerns of direct practice, as well as discussions of research and policy that impact on the profession, and many have explored new conceptualisations for understanding both our discipline and diverse social issues. This issue again demonstrates a critical engagement with a range of people impacted by political, economic and social conditions such as children with disabilities, women, older adults, gender diverse people seeking health care, social work students, and social work practitioners working in the field. Supervision is often well-represented in the journal and this issue publishes two new contributions. We also carry articles that contribute to the record of our own development as a profession in Aotearoa New Zealand. These articles come together to contribute to a body of knowledge to support social workers and what they encounter in their day-to-day work.

While we are an Aotearoa journal, supported by the ANZASW, we increasingly have an international reach. We can see that in several ways. Firstly, there are various

analytics we can draw on. Since the editorial collective first began monitoring unique visitors to the journal website, we have noticed a steady year-on-year growth from almost 14,000 in 2017 to almost 40,000 in 2021 (with a growth in unique users of over 10,000—over 25%—in the last year alone). The proportion of international visitors has also grown from 43% in 2017 to 49% during 2021. The proportion of international visitors is down a little from 55% in 2020 so we can assume the rapid growth in overall users in the last year must include larger proportion of visitors from Aotearoa. Secondly, we can see that our publications are being cited in international literature.

We also welcome contributions of articles and commentaries by authors from countries other than Aotearoa New Zealand. We are pleased to note that this issue contains articles by Indian and Canadian authors.

Staniforth et al.'s article entitled "The Council for Social Work Education in Aotearoa New Zealand: A brief history" presents an interesting account of the work of Council since its inception in the mid-1990s. Drawing on Council archival material including minutes, reports, memos and the recollections of previous Presidents, the article recounts the evolution of the nomenclature of the organisation and constitutional developments. Several key issues that have guided much of the Council's collective action are examined: mandatory registration of social workers; relationships between Council member

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institutions and wider sectoral groups such as the Social Workers Registration Board; resourcing of the social work education sector and the Council itself; and bi-cultural commitments. While the Council membership have not always agreed on a variety of matters their collaborative endeavours are occurring in an environment where they are competing for students; as Fraser, a previous President noted, the Council are “all concerned about the same things which gave us a common focus and drive”. Staniforth et al. note the forthcoming changes in the polytechnic sector and the likelihood of a shift in relationships and power in the Council. Increases in the fees of the international associations to which the Council belongs and no sign of adequate funding for the education sector by the Tertiary Education Commission are continuing challenges for the Council, along with other policy / practice issues.

Cox et al.’s article on student hardship reviews the literature relating to this pressing concern. Social work education, with its combination of classroom and fieldwork learning, presents unique challenges to students and their ability to access and survive their social work education. As student loans and allowances become more difficult to access due to constricted criteria, and their rates become increasingly inadequate in the face of steeply rising living costs, most students top up their income with paid employment during study. However, for social work students, the full-time nature of long periods of fieldwork placement makes this option unachievable, leading to intense hardship. Particular gaps in the research remain in understanding the intersecting effects of ethnicity, gender and disability and, in particular, the impact on Aotearoa New Zealand students of this phenomenon.

In the first of two supervision focussed articles, “Registered social workers’ supervision across areas of practice in Aotearoa New Zealand”, Kieran O’Donoghue reports on a quantitative study

of social workers’ experience of supervision. This article examines the supervisory experiences and views of registered social workers across the practice areas of statutory services, health and non-government organisations (NGOs). Drawing on data from 266 postal survey respondents, the article establishes a baseline for supervision across areas of practice in Aotearoa New Zealand and discusses the implications any differences have for the supervision of registered social workers. O’Donoghue found that supervision in health and NGO areas was more professional, clinical, cultural, reflective and involved more positive content within a more constructive supervision climate than supervision in the statutory area. O’Donoghue recommends that the significant difference in quality of supervision be addressed through changing the supervision climate, developing the capability and expertise of supervisors and separating professional / clinical supervision from line management.

In “Asking the ‘dumb’ questions: An evaluative survey of reflective supervision with statutory child protection social workers”, Matt Rankine and Andrew Thompson draw on data from the pre / post online evaluation of an action research intervention study with supervisors and supervisees in Oranga Tamariki (statutory children’s service). The study contained three separate parts: development of a learning community with OT supervisors (Rankine & Thompson, 2021); thinking aloud in supervisor–supervisee dyads; and an online evaluation pre- and post-intervention of the action research study.

The aim of the online survey was to measure participants’ supervision practices, and the extent to which perceptions of confidence, reflection, professional learning and resilience improved over time. The results from the survey demonstrated that social workers had increased confidence as they built reflective capacity, resiliency and improved their supervision practice. The study identified the importance of

developing learning spaces that enhance reflective supervision for supervisors and supervisees in child protection.

In “Responses to abuse, neglect, and trauma of children with intellectual disability: Experiences of social workers and health practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand”, Kim Simpson et al. report on a study which focused on exploring the experiences and perspectives of social workers and health practitioners to abuse, neglect, and trauma among children with intellectual disabilities. The authors draw on data gained via a focus group and a more in-depth exploration and investigation with four experienced social workers with the aim of providing a wider perspective of practice and policy issues among children with intellectual disability.

The findings show that, to ensure safety and implement support interventions, practitioners need to be equipped with knowledge about disability and its related needs. Furthermore, to influence significant change, a strong relational practice with children with intellectual disabilities, their whānau and family is vital. Simpson and colleagues urge social workers to draw on relational practice, socio-ecological frameworks, human rights and social justice, and advocacy to develop appropriate assessments and interventions to improve the wellbeing of children with intellectual disabilities.

In “Loneliness and boredom in residential care: Voices of older adults”, Myunik Panthi Mail reports on a phenomenological qualitative study conducted through participant observation, in-depth interviews with 24 residents and key informant interviews with 10 staff members in a residential care setting in Aotearoa New Zealand. The findings emphasise the presence of loneliness and boredom in residential care despite the efforts made by the settings to provide activities and support. Staff and family support helped to alleviate loneliness and boredom and participants employed individual coping

strategies. Collaboration between social workers, health professionals, nursing staff and activities staff is essential to identify and minimise the risk of loneliness and boredom. Social workers need to identify concerns, limitations and problems that affect residents’ participation in activities. Collaboration between social workers, care workers and activities coordinators is important in offering diverse and meaningful activities.

Francis et al. explore the personalities of single and married women in their quantitative study in India. The importance of studying married and single women in India has become more pertinent because of the changing attitudes towards unmarried women, increased literacy rate of women, and their involvement in politics and economic development. The authors suggest that there were no significant differences in personality between single and married women in their sample of 52 women. This raises questions about traditional views which suggest that women should be married and therefore that status attached to marriage should be challenged, including by social workers. Social workers, especially those working in women-centred practice, can support the agency and citizenship of women in Indian society. Social workers also have a critical role in ensuring gender-inclusive practices are occurring at a micro-level, in communities, and also at the policy table.

In “It takes a village: Advancing attachment theory and recovering the roots of human health with the Circle of Seven Essential Needs”, Mike Sosteric and Gina Ratkovic (Canada) note that Bowlby’s attachment theory (AT) remains a popular way to understand infant, child, adolescent, and even adult and family dysfunction. However, they argue that attachment theory is a reductive theory that ignores a wider range of human needs and has caused significant hardship and trauma. AT develops within Eurocentric and ideologically rooted presumptions that

existing capitalist socialisation processes (processes that foreground gender, a gendered division of labour, individuality, self-sufficiency, independence, and early detachment from parents and family) are necessarily an advance over earlier, more collectively oriented, systems. The authors note the importance of recent scholarship that is beginning to ask critical questions about the dominant European systems of socialization of children.

In this conceptual article, Sosteric and Ratkovic suggest the replacement of AT with a less ideological, healthier, and more empirically informed approach to socialisation and social care—one that might help us explore how to build a society capable of actuating the full potential of all its citizens. Sosteric and Ratkovic assert that the only way to actualise full human potential is to move the locus of human health and full development away from a single woman, or even a single nuclear family, to a village, a community, and a society that understands the complexity of human needs.

There are three viewpoint articles in this issue. First up, in “Challenging the status quo of gendered cancer care”, Lizzie Waring notes that LGBTTQIA+ users of health services are at a higher risk for certain cancers yet access relevant screening and healthcare less frequently than cis-gendered, heterosexual women. Literature reports fears of discrimination and experiencing disrespectful care from health professionals. Women’s Clinics in health endorse a gender binary, with an assumption of cis-gendered heteronormativity. Waring argues that, as social workers, we have responsibilities under the Code of Ethics and our SWRB Core Competencies to advocate for change and challenge the status quo.

Maddison Little also explores gender-affirming health care in her viewpoint: “Is banning conversion therapy enough? Aotearoa New Zealand and access to

gender-affirming healthcare”. Little notes that recent legislation before the New Zealand Parliament has promoted much discussion of conversion therapy acknowledging that it causes harm and is linked to serious mental health issues. Little conducted a literature search to explore what information is available in Aotearoa New Zealand, and internationally regarding conversion therapy and access to gender-affirming healthcare. She found that, despite this practice presenting a significant health issue for transgender and non-binary people, it is under-researched in Aotearoa New Zealand, particularly in social work. She makes some recommendations for future social work investment in better advocacy for transgender and non-binary people.

Tim Dare’s contribution responds to an article published in this journal in 2021 (Gulliver et al. 2018). Dare’s commentary is prompted by Gulliver et al. (2018) which contributes to both practical and academic interest in social licence. In “Qualitative research: Surveys, social licence and the integrated data infrastructure”, Pauline Gulliver and her co-authors explored the social licence to include data in New Zealand’s integrated data infrastructure. In the course of doing so, they advance a specific definition of social licence. Dare writes to argue that this definition cannot be an adequate definition of social licence due to conceptual difficulties.

There is a growing literature on the myriad ways that Covid-19 has impacted on social work practice and education. We are pleased to add another brief practice note to record some of the innovative responses to the pandemic. In a practice note “Community connections—A wellbeing response to supporting staff during the pandemic 2020-2022 in Aotearoa New Zealand” Emily Sheffield et al., of Community Connections, Aotearoa New Zealand, report on an intervention designed to support staff working remotely during a Covid-10 lockdown in 2021.

Finally, we offer three book reviews. Tony Stanley has reviewed *The Routledge International Handbook of Social Work Supervision* edited by Kieran O'Donoghue and Lambert Engelbrecht and *The Aotearoa Handbook of Criminology* edited by Elizabeth Stanley, Trevor Bradley, and Sarah Monod de Froideville. Liz Beddoe has reviewed *Shame and social work: Theory, reflexivity and practice* edited by Frost, Magyar-Haas, Schoneville and Sicora.

As always, if you are thinking about submitting an article for a future issue, do feel free to approach Liz Beddoe or any other member of the editorial collective. We are proud of our open-access, zero fees journal. Published quarterly, we particularly welcome work offering research and critical perspectives on contemporary policy developments, indigenous social work, post-colonialism, anti-racism, feminism, and progressive social work theory, policy and practice in all fields.

The journal also publishes book reviews and encourages short, topical pieces offering readers' critical commentaries, review essays, analyses of policy or practice developments, and practice notes and reports on research-informed practice innovations.

### Liz Beddoe

#### References

- Gulliver, P., Jonas, M., McIntosh, T., Fanslow, J., & Waayer, D. (2018). Qualitative research: Surveys, social licence and the integrated data infrastructure. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 30(3), 57–71. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/752b/9a86e32d18376b1aa2880ac3796b74e571b6.pdf>