

A rich collection of social work scholarship from Aotearoa New Zealand

Our winter issue includes a rich set of articles reporting on both local and international scholarship. This issue begins with “Whakamana Tangata: An evaluation of a restorative Te Ao Māori-based approach in youth justice” by Andrea Păroşanu, Ashley Seaford, Nan Wehipeihana (Ngāti Tukorehe, Ngāti Raukawa, Ngāti Porou, Te Whānau-ā-Apanui) and Aneta Mihinui-Selwyn (Te Arawa). In a mixed methods study, Păroşanu et al. explored the implementation and evaluation of Whakamana Tangata, a restorative, te ao Māori-based practice approach within a youth justice residence. This approach, developed within youth justice reforms, seeks to promote respectful and constructive engagement within secure residential care. Findings support restorative practices, combined with te ao Māori values, and a shift towards relational rather than punitive responses within the youth justice system. The authors conclude, however, that challenges remain, particularly regarding consistent embedding and alignment of restorative principles and te ao Māori values within the institutional frameworks of the youth justice system.

The representation of social work in public perceptions and via news media is a topic of ongoing interest in the profession. Staniforth et al. (2022) highlighted how the sensationalised nature of the media in Aotearoa New Zealand earlier noted that the most shocking responses from the public relate to child protection uplifts and deaths. They also highlighted the media’s criticisms on the perceived failings of individual social workers rather than any focus on political and systemic issues. In our second article for this issue, “Soft-spoken and sympathetic: Gendered news-media social worker narratives in Aotearoa New Zealand”, Niamh McLean and Katheryn Margaret

Pascoe note a current gap in the literature by focusing explicitly on the role of gender in media reporting. They report that social work is portrayed as a feminised profession, with key themes of altruism and nurturing reinforcing the historical perception of social work as *women’s work*. McLean and Pascoe recommend that collaboration between the profession and the media would challenge current portrayals of social work to better inform public perceptions while arguing for improved recognition of the value and treatment of social work and care work within society, the public, and across other professions and disciplines.

In “Catalysts for collaboration: Antecedents and potential benefits of non-profits working together”, Duncan Matthews, Laura Chubb and John Fenaughty write about the potential opportunities for small, non-profit organisations through working together. The article is premised on the findings of small-scale qualitative study completed as part of a master’s project. The findings draw on a literature review and interviews with six sector leaders in non-profit organisations to present conclusions related to cross-organisation collaboration. Of particular note is the size of the non-profit sector in New Zealand and the large number of small, non-profit organisations (organisations with between 1 and 20 staff). The authors suggest these present an untapped resource with potential to be realised from increased collaboration. The article realistically explores some of the barriers to collaboration but suggests there is much to be gained through interagency collaboration including peer support, shared resources, and knowledge building. By drawing connections with the international body of literature, the authors posit that this collaboration has flow-on impacts in relation

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to organisational efficiencies and resilience. The article contributes valuable knowledge about the benefits of working together, sharing resources and knowledge—especially for small organisations.

In “Only those who love us should decide our care: Elevating survivor voices of Takatāpui, Rainbow, and MVPFAFF+ communities”, Paora Moyle (Ngāti Porou) challenges social work and social workers to listen to the survivor voices from the Takatāpui, Rainbow, and MVPFAFF+ communities. They use a Pū Rā Ka Ū framework to honour the stories of the survivors of abuse in care. The stories—and therefore the survivors—stand clearly in the power and truth of their reflections. As social workers we are asked to acknowledge the role that we have, as a profession, played in the cultural genocide and structural violence of this group of survivors. In sharing these accounts, Moyle challenges us to honour their voices, and radically reimagine how social work can engage with and support communities who have been, and are being, harmed by our practices.

This journal is privileged at times to publish stories about the history of social work in Aotearoa, offering us insight into the work of individual social work practitioners, educators, and researchers which highlights how the profession has grown and been shaped by its people in the context of significant social and political change. In this issue, Barbara Staniforth and Carole Adamson continue the “Their stories: Our history” series with an article about Jan Duke, and her key role as registrar with the Social Workers Registration Board and her contribution to professionalisation of social work in this country.

Using a life history research methodology, the authors interviewed Jan and people chosen by her as colleagues who walked alongside her at crucial times over the past 20 years and whose memories could add depth to the work she carried out with the Board. The result is a rich narrative

of the processes, relationships, tensions and resistances that cover the first quarter of this century. This time in our history saw profound changes in the social work landscape which included the development of social work education standards and the introduction of mandatory registration. This was a political time for Aotearoa social workers and the participants cite “Aunty Jan’s” skills in building relationships, managing dissent, navigating complex legislative hurdles, and advocating for those social workers disadvantaged by the changes, particularly our tangata whenua colleagues. The authors of this article lead us through Jan’s story in a way that offers nuance and fresh insight into what has occurred in our profession in the past 25 years.

By focusing on the ethical and practical challenges faced by social workers working in the context of assisted dying in Aotearoa New Zealand, Laura Ann Chubb, Harriet Nickels, Liz Beddoe, Georgina Guild and Eileen Joy offer a novel and timely contribution to the literature. This study examines social workers’ perspectives on assisted dying following the End of Life Choice Act 2019. “Supporting choice, preventing harm: Social workers’ knowledge gaps and ethical challenges with assisted dying in Aotearoa New Zealand” highlights key professional challenges, including navigating client autonomy, managing ethical dilemmas and the need for ongoing professional development. Chubb et al. identify the systemic barriers affecting marginalised groups, including Māori, and highlight the need for clearer role definitions and culturally appropriate practices aligned with te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The literature reporting the social work student experience in Aotearoa continues to grow. Earlier this year Watson and Howells (2025, p. 10) reported that it “can take over a decade before the financial benefits of a degree (higher salary) outweigh the lack of income while studying” considering social work and other professions with unpaid

placements. The impacts on social work students' financial wellbeing were also reported in Bartley et al. (2024). Studying social work also has social impacts. In "Student strategies for surviving social work education in Aotearoa New Zealand" Barbara Staniforth, Sonya Hunt, Liz Beddoe and Kendra Cox (Te Ure o Uenukukōpako, Te Whakatōhea, Ngāi Tūhoe, Ngāti Porou) add to the findings reported in Beddoe et al. (2024) in this journal. The previous article focused on the challenges social work students faced in their social work qualifying programme. These impacts were in personal and family relationships, their social and cultural participation, and on their physical and emotional wellbeing. The present article shifts focus to reports on part of a study of student hardship that asked Aotearoa New Zealand social work students about the strategies that they utilised to maintain their wellbeing, and to offer their advice to future students. The findings indicated a strong reliance on relational supports with peers, family/whānau and friends. The authors note that, while it is important to learn from the students about the strategies and supports that were useful in sustaining them and enhancing their resilience, it is critical that educators recognise the structural origins of these challenges and to resist the neoliberal policies and conditions that are downgrading the experience of tertiary students.

Our experience in Aotearoa of political and social realities parallels that of our international colleagues, however there are some unique challenges for communities beyond our borders which social work researchers give voice to, and which can guide and inspire practice around the globe. In this issue, Norkaina Samama reports on a community development project in the Southern Philippines, specifically on the role of women's self-help groups in striving for the basic human right of gender equality. This qualitative study adds to the growing body of research about the value of self-help groups for women—their role as platforms for service delivery and advocacy at social,

economic and political levels. There is substantial evidence for the value of such groups in tackling exploitation by supporting women to achieve financial independence, peer support, education and sensitisation. This study reports on the barriers to participating in such groups such as multiple social obligations and financial instability and recognises the Philippines as a deeply patriarchal society with strong cultural norms. The author is clear, therefore, about the challenges ahead, but their findings offer evidence that success can be achieved at the community level and insight into how self-help groups for women can be supported to develop and grow.

Shifting to India, in "Does spiritual coping help families of international migrants thrive? A qualitative study of social work practices in Kerala", Anurupa Bhattacharjee and Princy Thomas explore the role of spiritual coping mechanisms implemented by professional social workers to help families of international migrants in Kerala, focusing on their effectiveness and associated challenges. This qualitative study involved interviews with 12 social workers with at least 2 years' experience supporting families of international migrants and 10 individual members of families of international migrants who had received social work interventions incorporating spiritual coping strategies over a minimum period of 6 months.

The study found that various spiritual practices, including prayer, meditation, and mindfulness, were crucial for helping families of international migrants manage the emotional stress caused by separation. Spiritual practice also helped with management of emotions and provided relief from anxiety and depression. The authors recommend that social workers embrace a holistic approach that incorporates spiritual dimensions enabling them to offer more effective and culturally sensitive interventions, strengthening their support for families of international migrants as they face migration-related challenges.

A commentary piece completes the articles in this issue. In this provocative and engaging article Ranginui Belk (Ngāti Tūwharetoa, Rereahu, Ngāti Hine), Lana Petrovic and Eileen Joy ask the question “I just graduated—now what? A wero to social work education’s settler colonialism and White supremacy”. The commentary article examines settler colonialism and White supremacy within social work education and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand through two social work graduates’ perspectives and that of an educator. The lenses employed are personal and political. They lay down many challenges for social work education. In their conclusions, Belk et al. argue that our ethical standards and values demand a radical transformation of how future social workers are prepared for the work of actively challenging settler colonial structures in practice settings. They call for educators to intentionally radicalise students through creating learning environments where students develop the courage and the skills to advocate for structural change within organisations and policies. Finally, they suggest that, beyond graduation, ongoing funded professional development and supervision models are developed to centre decolonising practices.

In the one book review in this issue, Liz Beddoe reviews Paul Michael Garrett’s book *Social Work and Common Sense: A Critical Examination* which Beddoe notes is a welcome addition to followers of his substantial body of work.

Liz Beddoe

For the Editorial Collective

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