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# Editorial

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*Mary Nash*

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What better frame of mind in which to sit down and write an editorial than after spending an afternoon on a Recertification Panel, presented with three stunning examples of best practice in Aoteroa New Zealand social work? As we shared our assessments of the recertification portfolios, I was encouraged to think that the journal contents will reflect aspects of that same best practice generously recorded, investigated and analysed by members of our Association. Perhaps some articles will challenge some of you to try out new techniques, or inspire others of you to write that paper you have been nurturing for quite a while but never find the time to write.

On the Recertification Panel, we became aware that in all three of the portfolios, the advocacy role of the social worker had prominence and interestingly the first of our articles in this issue examines community advocacy as a social work role. This article is the first of two in which Paula Crean and Mary Ann Baskerville will present and discuss their research on advocacy. In this article the authors review literature relating to community advocacy from the perspective of social work practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. The term 'community advocate' is used to keep the focus as broad as possible lest the traditional term of 'welfare' advocate is seen as potentially limiting through its strong association with poverty. I am sure the article will raise debate about how we define advocacy, and how it connects with social and community development work. This question is opened up further by Marie Leadbetter who asks whether there is a link between social work and international justice. I think Marie's fascinating account of the social justice work she has done provides its own answer as she explores the ways in which a social work and human rights career have points in common.

Our next article is a thought-provoking study of the professional development of New Zealand social workers who engage in psychotherapy. Kazantzis et al., note how the therapeutic functions of social work have tended to be downplayed in this country, and so this multinational research into therapist development, involving 36 social workers who identified themselves as conducting therapy within mental health services, covers interesting new ground for our readers.

The two previous articles raise issues concerning social workers, the significance of their professional identity and its provenance. Judy Wivell and Michael Naughton are interested in the relationship between the world of social work education and those that seek to influence it since the passing of the Social Workers Registration Act (2003). Their list of influences includes legislation, educators, service users, practitioners, students, the ANZASW, agencies and the availability of financial and other relevant resources. As a profession, we need to critically examine the competing interests and alliances involved in the debates about who should deliver what kind of professional education to social workers. Moreover, we always need to be mindful that in the end, government policy will strongly influence the purchasing power of agencies employing qualified staff. It is likewise important to acknowledge that tertiary institutions may be more or less welcoming hosts to social work both as an academic and applied discipline. Who benefits most in this uncertain and challenging environment

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is an ongoing and fascinating area of study, but from the point of view of service users, it is a very practical concern, and all involved must be mindful that they are the people who in the end are most affected by education standards in social work.

We are fortunate to have another article in the 'Their stories, our history' series. This time Barbara Staniforth considers the social work career of Judith MacKenzie, which she argues has exemplified a side of the community / professionalism debates which demonstrated an unyielding commitment to the development of the profession of social work even though it came at a great personal and professional cost. Questions of social justice are never far from the surface for social workers and Barbara, with Judith's collaboration, has captured the flavour of debates in the health sector during the mid-eighties.

The next contribution from Margaret Pack is a welcome response to the coverage on leadership and supervision in the previous issue of *Social Work Review*. As editors, we were slightly challenged as to whether we had received an article or a letter, and really it is both. To paraphrase, Margaret is reflecting on what makes for a 'good' supervisory relationship, drawing on her own experience and she writes to us to offer her reflections on this, hoping that her observations may encourage continuing reflection on this theme. As she notes, themes from practice provide another level of understanding where new and reformulated frameworks for practice emerge. And this point is the ideal introduction to the final piece we have selected for this issue.

In our Practice Notes section, Grant Thomas, who works as a psychiatric social worker, is a key worker who specialises in psychotherapy. His contribution fits well in this issue, coinciding with the research reported by Kazantzis et al. Grant shares his reflections on what it is that facilitates in clients the ability to bring about the changes they want to achieve in their lives. His examination (illustrated with a case study carefully adapted for the purposes of confidentiality) of the power of the therapeutic relationship and the relational tools he has used, is both practical and reflective.

To end, I would like to draw your attention to those great, difficult questions we are challenged to consider by Sarah Fraser, in her recent contribution to Social Work Noticeboard. Amongst other matters, she asks us to consider how to provide better working conditions for social workers, to strengthen our sense of solidarity, to further our professional development and to raise our critical awareness of who influences our practice, and what forces, in the light of global social work, may we need to recognise and resist locally and internationally? The three of us on the Recertification Panel I mentioned at the beginning of this editorial, felt these questions had relevance for our work, as they certainly do for our readers and colleagues.