Tough times in our bubble of 5 million

In our editorial for the first issue of 2020, Neil Ballantyne and I wrote the following:

> Here in Aotearoa New Zealand, at the edge of the world, we may count our blessings. In comparison with others, we seem to have a government that listens to health experts and appears to be taking steps to shield the population from the consequences of the economic fallout of Covid-19. However, as responses to the crisis evolve, we must maintain a strong critical perspective on government actions, both here and abroad.
>
> … as we move forward, we must also monitor and highlight the impact on social service agencies, social workers and service users. We must seize the opportunity to highlight the social consequences of the pandemic; and, in these new times, we must assert the need for new ways of forging social solidarity—ways of renewing the social contract between citizens and the state. (Beddoe & Ballantyne, 2020, p. 1)

A few months later, living in alert Level 1[i], the importance of retaining a critical social work perspective is clear. We are now, in Aotearoa New Zealand at least, no longer in lockdown. As we have returned to some semblance of normality, there has been much reflection on our experiences. Work is back, though many are still working from home, schools are back in operation and health services are returning to normal, in many sectors we are all at least sketching out a plan B, should community transmission of Covid-19 return. But it's not back to normal.

Driving around Auckland in Level 1, I noticed many closed shops and cafes. The skies no longer incessantly deliver the familiar and frequent glimpses of A380s and 747s bringing in tourists and conveying home tired returning travellers. We look up at the faded billboards for airlines that have all but disappeared from our skies. At the time of writing we are arguing about whether it is ethical, or even legal, to charge returning residents as much as $9,000 for quarantine if they want to bring their family home. Statements about 'foreigners' stigmatise New Zealanders who aren't Tangata Whenua or Pākehā. We are less likely to hug people we have just met, more likely to create a greater distance between us in the checkout queue, and moved to exclaim "it's not the virus" when we cough. Many of us have returned to our 'normal' workloads, rendered unmanageable ages ago by staffing 'review' after review, and feel the constant frisson of anxiety about when 'the pain' will hit our organisation. Employers are considering their real estate costs, because working from home was actually ok, we were all still very productive. It wasn't all jigsaws and sourdough. And 2020's new normal is rife with uncertainty. Will our jobs survive? Will the economy bounce back or slump further? When will we be able to leave our bubble[ii] of 5 million and travel again?

As might be anticipated, as the pandemic widened and deepened its grasp on global humanity, politicians, journalists, scientists and the ubiquitous critical analysts of every comment section of every news medium pontificated on the rights and wrongs of every action in the global response. While the lockdown rule arguments were wrought in press conferences, in every bubble, and, from a safe distance, over suburban garden fences, an academic steam train gained speed. In countries wealthier than ours, large funds were rapidly created to research impacts of the pandemic including social science research. Academics, (perhaps mainly men, not so distracted by the triple demands of 'working from home', while simultaneously caring for pre-schoolers and home-schooling), used the time freed up by not commuting to write rapid articles and

put together grant applications. Puffing with excitement, every journal editor set up 'a zoom' to urgently plan the call for papers for the Covid-19 special issue for their journal. Social work journals rapidly joined the fray. I was urged on the Facebook page of the ANZASW to quickly whip one up! But with only four issues a year and commitments to publish *Te Kōmako* and *Tu Mau*, this editor was not easily swayed. Rather, I was inspired by the brilliant efforts of colleagues in the United Kingdom (UK) who, inspired by Twitter conversations, created a digital magazine, *Social Work 2020 under Covid-19*. At the time of writing this editorial, the group had published five issues. In the final edition, the editors comment:

> [In the] five editions since the idea was first conceived in March, we have so far published over 100 articles from across all four UK countries and five others internationally. As the world around us changed beyond what many of us could comprehend we came together to share our experiences, fears and hopes. The magazine created a space where live issues could be brought to the fore, allowing contributors to explore them as they unfolded around them without the boundaries and confines of traditional academic publishing. (*Social Work 2020 under Covid-19*, July 2020)

Encouraged by the efforts of our UK colleagues we decided to create a similar opportunity but on a smaller scale. In this issue of *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, we include the first of several special sections on responses to Covid-19. Those included here are diverse pieces. Inspired by the UK *Covid 2020*, we asked for contributions from a range of people in social work—students, practitioners and academics. This section, which will also appear in our December issue, includes several commentary pieces addressing broad aspects of Covid-19 and variable length brief reflections. For any readers inspired to write about Covid-19 from any social work standpoint, please contact us directly (editors@anzasw.nz).

General articles

This issue also includes two general articles and a *Viewpoint.* In "Improving treatment and outcomes for young people with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in the youth justice system: A social work led response and practice framework", Vanessa Oatley and Anita Gibbs present results of a systematic literature review of secondary data to explore fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) and young people. Significant themes developed in this study include the connection between the impacts of FASD and risk of contact with the youth justice (YJ) system and how it affects young people's ability to navigate this contact. Oatley and Gibbs argue that there is potential for social work to take a lead role in improving treatment and outcomes for young people with FASD in youth justice. A FASD-informed practice framework is offered as a tool to guide social workers who are working with young people with FASD in the Aotearoa New Zealand YJ system and beyond.

"Supervision, support and professional development for newly qualified social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand" reports on selected aspects of findings related to supervision of newly qualified social workers. This article draws on data gathered in a three-year mixed methods study conducted by social work researchers from five schools of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand (Ballantyne et al., 2019a, 2019b, 2019c). Phase two of the Enhancing the Readiness to Practise of Newly Qualified Social Workers (Enhance R2P) project employed a mixed methods study (surveys and interviews) to explore how well prepared newly qualified social workers (NQSWs) are, in their first two years of practice, to enter professional social work. In this article, Liz Beddoe, Neil Ballantyne, Jane Maidment, Kathryn Hay and Shayne Walker report on findings on supervision. The researchers found that around half of NQSWs were supervised at least once every two weeks, but another half were supervised monthly or less frequently. Observation of practice by supervisors was either very infrequent

or entirely absent from the professional development of NQSWs. This study reveals great variability in the formal supervision and other supports available for NQSWs, despite strong mandates for supervision offered by the professional bodies. More integrated systems of supervision, peer support and planned professional development are needed especially given the potential impact on retention of NQSWs and practitioner wellbeing.

In a reflective *Viewpoint* article, "When you become the lived experience: The journey backwards from academia", Mim Fox and Sarah Wayland reflect on experience as researchers and academics who knew and understood grief from a distance. They explore their prior positioning as experts who, through lived experience, have come to a place of not knowing: "From there we have stumbled awkwardly on to new understandings, hopefully to enrich our future research and teaching."

Covid-19 Special section

First up, in a *Commentary*, "The 'Hidden Depression' that never really went away", Anaru Eketone explores the current economic crisis with a retrospective examination of the impact of two named depressions that Aotearoa New Zealand experienced. He briefly surveys links between the 'Long Depression' of the late 19th century and the 'Great Depression' of the 1930s and its effects and its lasting legacy, and the consequences of the share market crash of 1987—in particular the impact on Māori. In this article Eketone notes that, following the 1987 crash, at its peak Aotearoa New Zealand reached unemployment of 10.5% in 1992. Statistics reveal, however, that Māori unemployment at the same time was 26%, with Non-Māori unemployment, including Pasifika, at around 7–8%. Thus, reports Eketone, "Aotearoa New Zealand shifted the pain of its restructuring from itself to the Māori population and, to a growing extent, to its Pasifika population". High levels of unemployment remained

for Māori and Eketone refers to this as an ongoing 'hidden depression'. Many Māori people did not recover from this 'Hidden Depression', and poverty worsened with the global financial crisis. Eketone argues that we can't have the next 30 years of Māori dealing with the fallout of Covid-19, just as Māori have spent the last 30 years failing to solve the fallout from the 1980s. Investment in job training and job creation must be prioritised.

In a second *Commentary*, "The tyranny of distance: The social effects and practice adaptations resulting from Covid-19 lockdown rules" Emily Keddell and Liz Beddoe explore the effects of the social distancing rules required by the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. The rules brought challenges of rapid adaptation and created new norms for behaviour that were governed by (and policed by) both the state and many citizens. Existing inequities relating to class and inequities relating to gender and childcare became much more visible. Those with more resources and secure jobs that could be managed by 'work from home' were less exposed to the economic fallout and the virus itself. In this *Commentary*, Keddell and Beddoe explore the many rapid changes that arrived with the pandemic, including changes for everyday social work practice.

In a *Viewpoint*, Kelly Glubb-Smith and Tania Roberts, a lecturer and a student respectively, explore the impact of l the Covid-19 lockdown on student wellbeing. They note that students had to rapidly adapt to online learning study in a fully online environment without face-to-face support and campus life. The usual pressures were intensified by the demands of parenting during lockdown and financial hardships.

Ai Sumihira worked in an acute Covid-19 ward earlier this year. In this *Viewpoint* article, Sumihira reflects on women's contributions during this period, drawing on relevant local and international literature to apply an intersectional gaze on social inequalities

of race and gender in health. She notes that Aotearoa New Zealand is considered to have done such remarkable work stopping Covid-19 from spreading extensively but a full recovery requires greater attention to be paid to addressing racism, unconscious bias and structural inequality.

Returning to the impact on study, Lee Henley, Kora Deverick and Kathryn Hay have contributed reflections on the impact of Covid-19 on an international social work placement undertaken in Battambang, Cambodia. A field educator, a student and an academic highlight the importance of joint work between university, student and host agency in designing clear tasks to be completed, to clarify roles and tasks in a crisis where the student and field educator had to return home to Aotearoa. Henley and colleagues describe how they adapted to ensure the placement was able to continue, resulting in successful placement outcomes.

In another *Viewpoint* with a focus on social work education, Nathan Jaquiery, Marissa Kaloga and Susan Wason explore the experiences of 'pandemic teaching and learning' by aligning it with the values and ethical principles of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Work Code of Ethics (ANZASW, 2019). Each contributor felt that it was important to capture their experiences during this significant experience.

Finally, in one of two *Viewpoints* authored by students, Eliza Perkinson critically reflects on the use of a *whakataukī* employed in the official response to the Covid-19 emerged a message: *he waka eke noa* (we are all in this together). The question is asked: Were we all really in it together? Lyanna Ross's brief reflection creates a series of hashtags to crystallise the experiences of education, whānau and home in the heart of the lockdown.

Together, these Covid-19 reflections combine as a thoughtful set of perspectives on our

experiences as educators, students and practitioners in the first semester of 2020. In the December issue we hope to publish several more practitioner perspectives. The journal gratefully acknowledges the contributions of all our authors, and the support offered by our reviewers who continued to respond and offer constructive critique while managing their own Covid-19 experiences.

Notes

i   In March 2020, the New Zealand Government announced four levels of alert for the Covid-19 pandemic. These levels specified the actions required and Level 4 was the highest. Retrieved from https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19/restrictions/alert-system-overview/

ii   The term *bubble* was used in Aotearoa New Zealand to denote the group of people within a dwelling with whom social distancing was not required during the Level 3 and 4 lockdowns. At the time of writing there is discussion about extending our national bubble to include easier travel between Aotearoa New Zealand and parts of Australia, and Pacific Islands that are considered free of Covid-19.

References

Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers. (2019). Code of Ethics. Author. Retrieved from https://anzasw.nz/code-of-ethics-2019/

Ballantyne, N., Beddoe, L., Hay, K., Maidment, J., Walker, S., & Ngan, L. (2019a). *Enhancing the readiness to practise of newly qualified social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Enhance R2P)—Report on phase one: The social work curriculum*. Wellington, NZ: Ako Aotearoa.

Ballantyne, N., Beddoe, L., Hay, K., Maidment, J., Walker, S., & Mayhew, Z. (2019b). *Enhancing the readiness to practise of newly qualified social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Enhance R2P)—Report on phase two: The readiness to practise of NQSWs*. Wellington, NZ: Ako Aotearoa.

Ballantyne, N., Beddoe, L., Hay, K., Maidment, J., Walker, S., & Merriman, C. (2019c). *Enhancing the readiness to practise of newly qualified social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand (Enhance R2P)—Report on phase three: The Professional Capabilities Framework*. Wellington, NZ: Ako Aotearoa.

Beddoe, L., & Ballantyne, N. (2020). Reflections from the heart of shutdown Aotearoa. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work, 32*(1), 1–4. doi:10.11157/anzswj-vol32iss1id713

COVID -2020. On line magazine. University of Sheffield. Retrieved from https://sw2020covid19.group.shef.ac.uk/

Liz Beddoe