



**Social Workers  
Registration Board**

**Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro**

# **SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION ACT (2003)**

**REVIEW REPORT OCTOBER 2012**

Presented to the Minister for Social Development Pursuant to  
Section 104 of The Social Workers Registration Act 2003

New Zealand Government



# REVIEW OF THE OPERATION OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION ACT

## Chairperson's Foreword

In compiling this report, the Social Workers Registration Board has sought input from a wide range of individuals and organisations to assist our reflection on the progress and experience to date under the Social Workers Registration Act (2003).

We are required by section 104 of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 to carefully consider whether the Act is achieving its underlying objectives of protecting the public and enhancing the professionalism of social workers. We then need to recommend any changes that may be required.

After years of debate regarding social work regulation, voluntary registration of social workers was introduced with the passing of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act).

The primary purpose of the Act is to protect the safety of members of the public by ensuring social workers are competent to practise.

Under a voluntary system individual social workers can choose whether they are registered or not and whether or not they will be held accountable for their practice through the processes established by the Act.

Currently over 3,600 hardworking, committed and competent social workers have made the decision to enhance their professionalism and hold themselves accountable for their practise by registering with the Board.

The Board commends each and every one of these Registered Social Workers for this, as they have proven by their commitment that Social Work is a profession. Social Workers do influence the social outcomes of vulnerable children, young people, adults and families/whānau through the orderly, responsible and disciplined activities that define social work practise.

A voluntary social work registration system does not protect the title of the profession. Anyone in New Zealand can currently use the title Social Worker.

They do not need to have a qualification.

They do not need to have any experience or be supervised.

They do not need to be competent.

They do not need to have police clearance.

They do not need to engage in any professional development.

There is no independent agency to investigate complaints made about them.

They cannot be stopped from practising.

**They are currently practising across the social services in New Zealand in the public, private and non-government sector.**

It is the Board's view, supported by the public, the social work profession, their representative bodies, social work educators, employers of social workers, and other key agencies, that it is time to move to a mandatory system of social work registration to ensure that the public is protected from those individuals who are not competent, qualified and experienced social workers.

The Board wants to ensure that all recipients of social work services are protected by the Act and that the public has access to the independent complaints and disciplinary process as established by the Act.

The Board is conscious that Social workers are professionals who can make an extraordinary difference in the life of vulnerable children, young people, adults and families/whānau.

It is a profession that requires specific skills and knowledge to enable the practitioner to successfully work alongside people coping with stressful events.

Good social work practice can help client's improve the quality of their life, and support the development of individuals, groups, communities and society as a whole.

Poor social work practice can have a negative effect.

Based on the feedback gained as part of the review of the Act, the Board is recommending to the Minister for Social Development that social work registration becomes mandatory. The Board will work with the Minister, Iwi and key social work organisations to ensure the transition from voluntary to mandatory registration is achieved as smoothly as possible.

The cost of registration is the biggest concern to social workers and their employers. The Board is self-funding with registration fees covering the administration of the registration process, Board registration activities and the Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal. By utilising the efficiencies available to it, the Board has reduced the cost of registration in the past few years but it still remains an ongoing concern.

The Board however believes there are approximately up to 4,000 social workers who are eligible for registration who have not yet registered. As this number become registered the economy of scale provided by the increasing number of Registered Social Workers would allow the Board to decrease costs by up to 50%. This would provide a registration system for all social workers that was funded by all social workers rather than the inequity of the current system that is funded by less than half the profession.

To be successful the Board is aware that a mandatory registration system needs to be culturally appropriate to Aotearoa New Zealand. Demonstrating competence to practise social work with Māori and with different ethnic and cultural groups are key requirements of the Act.

The Board will ensure that the aims and aspirations of Māori are integral and on-going priorities, and that access to the views of ethnic and cultural groups within New Zealand is maintained. Ensuring this happens has always been paramount for the Board and will continue to be developed.

The Board will work with Māori social service providers and organisations to ensure a bi-cultural approach to this process and to better provide for a culturally inclusive registration system.

Feedback has highlighted confusion over the different roles and functions that the Board and the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) fulfil. The Board and the ANZASW currently have a productive and respectful relationship but it is important that the social work profession understands that they have complementary, but very different, roles.

The Board acknowledges that confusion can occur over the different roles and intends to take greater responsibility for minimising this confusion. Mandatory Registration will help to diffuse confusion in that the public, employers of social workers and other key agencies will know that anyone using the title must be registered.

The Board, as a crown entity with accountability to the New Zealand public and the Government, gives the public an independent voice in their interaction with social workers.

The ANZASW will continue as the professional body for social workers, accountable to its members who can choose whether or not to belong, giving those social workers an independent voice.

Finally the Board wishes to acknowledge the concerns of those individual social workers, and their employers, who are unsure whether they will meet the minimum criteria for registration.

The Board recognises the wisdom, knowledge, experience and years of practice of many of those social workers who may not think that they meet the criteria for registration, due to not having a recognised qualification. The majority of those social workers would be eligible for registration under section 13 which recognises that practical experience can in some cases compensate for the lack of a recognised

social work qualification. Over the last few years the Board has worked hard to make the process more accessible and will continue to support this group of social workers to register. Individual support will be available to these social workers in order to support them through the registration process.

This is an exciting time not only for the Board but also the profession. It appears the time has come to move from voluntary to mandatory registration. To make this move successful for both the public and the social work sector, the support of social workers and their employers is needed. The feedback shows that this support is there and it is time to move forward together, ensuring that the benefits of registration are accessible to all.



Toni Hocquard

**Board Chair**

## PURPOSE

---

The Social Workers Registration Board (the Board) was established by Government under the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act). The key functions of the Board are to:

*create and maintain a framework for registration of social workers in New Zealand; and*

*promote and encourage high standards of practice and professional conduct among registered social workers and the employers of social workers.*

The Act provides a framework for the voluntary registration of social workers in New Zealand. Section 104 of the Act requires the Social Work Registration Board to:

*review the operation of Act and its own operations;*

*consider the extent to which the Act, and the system of voluntary registration it provides for, are achieving the stated purposes<sup>1</sup>; and*

*consider whether any amendments to the Act are necessary or desirable.*

This report outlines the Board's assessment of the extent to which the voluntary registration system is achieving the purposes of the Act.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Act specifies sections 3(a) and 3(d) as the purposes to be considered in the review. These are outlined in Section One: Background of this paper.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

1. This report outlines the Board's assessment of how effectively the current statutory provisions and the Board's policies contribute to the achievement of the purposes of the Social Workers Registration Act (2003) and examines ways in which the effectiveness of the registration system can be enhanced.
2. The principal focus of this analysis is, therefore, to consider the extent to which the Social Workers Registration Act and the system of voluntary registration it provides for are:
  - protecting the safety of members of the public, by prescribing or providing for mechanisms to ensure that social workers are –
    - i. competent to practise; and
    - ii. accountable for the way in which they practise; and
  - enhancing the professionalism of social workers.
3. The Board's primary focus to date has been on establishing an effective voluntary registration system for social workers.
4. The Board has achieved an average increase in the number of Registered Social Workers added to the register of 32% each year since 2008.
5. The average increase in the number of new applications for registration received from social workers each year is 38% since 2007.
6. With over 3,600 Registered Social Workers on the register to date the question of whether social worker registration has been accepted by the profession is no longer the issue. The issue now is very much to consider whether the Social Workers Registration Act and the system of voluntary registration it provides for is protecting the safety of members of the public.
7. It is the Board's view that with the current number of Registered Social Workers the Board is at the point where Mandatory Registration is required to formally recognise the Government's purposes in set out in the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.
8. The system of voluntary registration the Act provides only protects the safety of members of the public who engage with Registered Social Workers. A voluntary social work registration system does not protect the title of the profession, and as such anyone in New Zealand can currently use the title Social Worker.
9. Individuals that do not meet the minimum requirements for registration can continue to engage with the most vulnerable children, young people, adults and families/whānau in New Zealand and can do so without the skills and knowledge gained through a social work qualification. They do not need to have any experience or be supervised in their practise. They do not need to have their competence assessed or have their fitness to work with vulnerable individuals assessed via police clearance. They do not engage in any recognised professional development to ensure that they work according to accepted theories or best practise. There is no independent agency knowledgeable on social work best practise to investigate complaints made about them and therefore they can continue to practise without anyone being able to monitor whether or not they are causing harm.
10. These individuals are currently practising across the social services in New Zealand in the public, private and non-government sector.

### The Development of the Social Worker Registration Framework to date

11. The 2007 review was an opportunity for the Board to survey all stakeholders to identify significant opportunities and barriers as a result of the social worker registration framework implemented in October 2004.
12. The principal barriers identified in 2007 were:
  - the costs associated with registration and competence assessment were relatively high in comparison to other similar professions;

- the approach to competence did not facilitate registration of newly graduated social workers at the beginning of their careers; and
- the processes to evidence competence were complex.

In the intervening years the Social Workers Registration Board has implemented the following policy developments to address the identified barriers:

- reduced the cost of registration by 20% and the cost of competence assessment by almost 50%;
  - introduced the Graduate Competence Policy in 2008 to ensure that newly graduated social workers could obtain registration at the beginning of their careers;
  - reduced the complexity associated with the evidencing competence by introducing a paper based competence assessment.
13. Much has been achieved by the Board to date in establishing the infrastructure for social work registration but the current voluntary registration system provides the most identifiable area of concern.
14. The Board has previously considered and identified issues that the Board can action under the current voluntary registration mandate and the Board has, in consultation with stakeholders, established a set of policies and procedures on:
- Entitlement to Registration – Competence
  - Competence to Practise Social Work with Māori
  - Competence to Practise Social Work with Different Ethnic and Cultural Groups
  - Enough Practical Experience
  - Criteria for Section 7 Registration (Overseas Qualified)
  - Criteria for Section 10 Registration (Provisional)
  - Criteria for Section 11 Registration (Temporary)
  - Criteria for Section 12 Registration (Full)
  - Criteria for Section 13 Registration (Unqualified)
  - Fit and Proper
  - English language competence and English language testing
  - Renewal of Annual Practising Certificate
  - Continuing Professional Development for Registered Social Workers
  - Supervision Expectations for Registered Social Workers
  - Recognised New Zealand social work qualifications
  - The process for recognition/re-recognition of social work qualifications in New Zealand
15. The Board considers there is a strong case for Mandatory Registration based on the uptake and support for registration by the profession and the employers of social workers. The economy of scale provided by an increase in the number of Registered Social Workers under Mandatory Registration would offset the current per capita costs of registration.
16. We are recommending that the Government amend the Social Workers Registration Act to provide for a mandatory system of social worker registration through protection of the title “social worker” and by requiring that functions normally performed by social workers cannot be performed by unregistered persons.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The UK’s Care Standards Act 2000 provides a model for this approach. The Act provides for the protection of the title “social worker” by the creation of an offence, punishable by a fine of up to £5000, for a person who is not registered as a social worker to use that title or hold themselves out as a registered social worker with an intention to deceive.

In interpreting this provision, the General Social Care Council advise that: “Registration is not optional. It is illegal for someone to call themselves a social worker with intent to deceive unless they are registered, and the police can investigate such cases. This affects people with ‘social worker’ in their job title, but also people in roles which require a social work qualification or which involve work normally only undertaken by social workers”.

17. The Board's view is that, in the interests of maintaining minimum professional standards, only those with minimum specified levels of experience, or who have obtained recognised qualifications, should be entitled to use the title "social worker".
18. Although a proportion of the current social work workforce may not currently meet the Board's standards, introducing a mandatory registration system need not involve compromising enhanced professionalism, or creating a hierarchy of social work categories. Comprehensive public safety and accountability can readily be achieved by extending the current system of provisional registration to all social workers who meet minimum entry level competence requirements, and are willing and able to work towards full registration.
19. Where current members of the social work workforce have recognised practical experience those social workers would be eligible for registration under section 13 which recognises that practical experience can in some cases compensate for the lack of a recognised social work qualification. Over the last few years the Board has worked hard to make the process more accessible and will continue to support this group of social workers to register. Individual support will be available to these social workers in order to support them through the registration process.
20. The Board notes that the both the Care Standards Act 2000 (UK) and Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (New Zealand) provide models on which such an approach could be broadly based.
21. The Board's preliminary view is that the legislation could provide that:
  - an unregistered person cannot use words, titles, abbreviations or descriptions stating or implying they are a social worker;
  - an unregistered person cannot claim to be practising social work or state or do anything that is calculated to suggest that they are practising social work;
  - a definition that says social work includes, but is not limited to a list of specified roles (such as social workers exercising authority under the Children Young Persons and their Families Act, social work positions in District Health Boards and the non-government sector, etc.);
  - "social work" includes work in any position where a social work qualification is a prerequisite to employment;
  - "social work" includes any set of skills and knowledge specified from time to time by competence components set or recognised by the Board. This will allow for the introduction of advanced fields of specialised practice, i.e. Care and Protection Social Work, Health Social Work, by the Social Workers Registration Board; and
  - other registered professionals, for example health practitioners, may undertake activities normally performed by social workers if those activities fall within the accepted scope of their profession and they are competent to undertake those activities.
22. In the Board's view this approach would not allow persons who are clearly undertaking core social work activities to simply reclassify themselves. Nevertheless it is unlikely that the 13,170 people who self-identified as social workers in the 2006 Census will become registered social workers. The Board estimates the number of practising social workers who are likely to comprise the target group for registration could extend to 8000. This is based on an estimate of the number of social workers employed in the health sector (primarily through District Health Boards); the number of social workers employed by the Child, Youth and Family Service; and an approximation of 'other' social workers operating in the non-government sector and in private practice.
23. Mandatory registration does not mean that the remainder of those who self-identified as social workers in the 2006 Census would be unable to remain in the social service workforce but just that they do not claim the title and identified expertise of those who have met the minimum criteria to earn the title Social Worker.
24. The Board envisages that a system of Mandatory Registration would recognise competent social work practise, ensure that the public are protected from those not deemed competent to practise social work and hold those who meet the criteria to work under the title social worker accountable for their practise.

25. Mandatory registration is accepted and shown to provide a system of accountability for allied professions in New Zealand as well as for the Social Work profession in other countries. It is now time to ensure that the New Zealand public is afforded the assurance of regulated, competent and accountable social work delivery that mandatory registration will provide

## Recommendations to the Minister for Social Development:

The Board recommends that the Government:

1. **Agree to amend the Social Workers Registration Act (2003) to provide for a mandatory system of social worker registration through protection of the title “social worker” and by requiring that functions normally performed by social workers cannot be performed by unregistered persons;**
2. **Agree that policy work should be undertaken as soon as possible because of the potentially long lead time for legislative change.**

Early decisions and announcements of the Government’s legislative intentions could add significant impetus to engagement in the registration system by employers and social workers.

Subject to the Minister’s support for this recommendation, the Board will commence scoping work, in consultation with the Ministry of Social Development and others, on defining the scope of coverage of a mandatory registration system based on protection of the title “social worker” and associated limitations on who can practise social work.

## Introduction

1. The Social Workers Registration Board (the Board) was established by Government under the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 (the Act). The key functions of the Board are to:
  - create and maintain a framework for registration of social workers in New Zealand; and
  - promote and encourage high standards of practice and professional conduct among registered social workers and the employers of social workers.
2. The Act provides a framework for the voluntary registration of social workers in New Zealand. Section 104 of the Act requires the Social Work Registration Board to:
  - review the operation of Act and its own operations;
  - consider the extent to which the Act, and the system of voluntary registration it provides for, are achieving the stated purposes;<sup>3</sup> and
  - consider whether any amendments to the Act are necessary or desirable.The Act states that the Board's findings are to be reported to the Minister for Social Development and tabled in Parliament.<sup>4</sup>
3. This report outlines the Board's assessment of the extent to which the voluntary registration system is achieving the purposes of the Act.

The paper is presented in four sections:

Section One provides the submission responses and results obtained from the Board's Mandatory Registration Discussion Document and the Public Survey.

Section Two provides a background to the introduction of a voluntary registration system and describes the key features of the current model and outlines progress to date.

Section Three considers how effectively the current statutory provisions and the Board's policies contribute to the achievement of the purposes of the Act and discusses possible enhancements.

Section Four provides a suggested two staged implementation process to achieve Mandatory registration including proposed amendments to the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.

---

<sup>3</sup> The Act specifies sections 3(a) and 3(d) as the purposes to be considered in the review. These are outlined in Section One: Background of this paper.

<sup>4</sup> The Act requires the Board to report to the Minister at intervals of not more than 5 years.

## Methodology

4. As a part of the review process the Board released a discussion paper to gain feedback from the public, social workers, their representative bodies, educators, employers of social workers, and other key agencies and individuals likely to have a direct interest in the efficient and effective operation of the Act.
5. The Board was conscious that although over 400 responses to the discussion document were received there was a lack of participation from the public. The Board was eager to ensure that the public had the opportunity to participate in the review process as previously public engagement with Board reviews had been limited. In order to directly communicate with a cross section of the New Zealand public the Board engaged a research company to undertake a survey on issues relating to the registration of social workers.

### The Mandatory Registration Discussion Document

6. To ensure that any recommendation made to the Minister is truly representative of the New Zealand population, there were no restrictions placed on those who could provide feedback.
7. The main focus of the discussion document was whether mandatory registration would better protect the public and the profession.
8. The discussion paper sought to find out whether people perceive there are public risks associated with the voluntary registration system and whether New Zealand should move towards mandatory registration.
9. The discussion paper was released for consultation on the Board's web site on 15 March 2011.
10. Copies of the discussion paper and a letter from the Board's Chairperson were also posted and/or emailed to:
  - Ministers of Government
  - Members of Parliament
  - District Health Boards
  - Employers of registered social workers (approx. 658 organisations)
  - All registered social workers (approx. 3000 social workers)
  - Non-government organisations (NGOs) (approx. 2,609 organisations)
  - NGOs with employees using the MSD Social Work Study Awards (approx. 259 organisations)
  - Main social service umbrella groups.
11. To help inform the general public of the discussion paper, articles were placed in several social service newsletters, and a public notice was placed in local and national newspapers.
12. Members of the Board also made themselves available to speak to groups in the community.
13. Approximately 4000 copies of the discussion paper were distributed.
14. The closing date for submissions was initially 1 July 2011. Due to a number of requests for an extension, the closing date was deferred to 1 August 2011.
15. Appendix A lists the groups/organisations that provided submissions. Due to privacy, the names of individuals providing submissions have not been listed.
16. The discussion paper gave points and questions for people to consider when providing feedback. The Board also provided the option of a feedback form with questions from the discussion paper. Submitters chose to supply feedback using either the feedback form or by writing to the Board. The feedback form is included as Appendix B.

## The Public Survey

17. As noted above the Board was conscious that although over 400 responses to the discussion document were received there was a lack of participation from the public. The Board was eager to ensure that the public had the opportunity to participate in the review process as previously public engagement with Board reviews had been limited.
18. In order to directly communicate with a cross section of the New Zealand public the Board engaged a research company to undertake a survey on issues relating to the registration of social workers. Included in the omnibus survey was a set of questions for the Social Workers Registration Board (SWRB). A copy of the question set is attached as Appendix C.
19. Each omnibus is based on a nationally representative sample of New Zealanders, over 18 years of age. Interviewing for the omnibus survey took place between 11 and 18 April 2012 and a total sample of n=500 members of the general public were interviewed.
20. All interviewing was completed by telephone. Results based on the total omnibus sample have been weighted by age, gender and region using weighting parameters sourced from Statistics New Zealand (2006 Census of Population & Dwellings). The weighting procedure corrects for any demographic imbalances in the sample, so that the reported results are based on a truly representative sample of New Zealanders.
21. Results based on the (weighted) total sample are subject to a maximum margin of error of +/- 4.7 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level). This means, for example, that had the research company found 50 percent of respondents report that they expect social workers would be registered, we could be 95 percent sure of getting the same result, plus or minus 4.7 percent, had we interviewed everyone in the population.

# SECTION ONE: RESULTS FROM THE MANDATORY REGISTRATION DISCUSSION DOCUMENT AND PUBLIC SURVEY

## THE DISCUSSION DOCUMENT

---

22. The Board received 422 submissions from across a range of individuals and groups throughout New Zealand.
  - 399 (95%) submissions were in support of moving to mandatory registration
  - 23 (5%) submissions supported registration remaining voluntary
  - 390 (92%) submissions came from individuals
  - 32 (8%) submissions were made on behalf of a group or organisation(s).
23. The largest number of individuals represented by one submission came from the ANZASW, a professional body for social workers. ANZASW ran its own membership opinion survey based on the mandatory registration discussion paper. The ANZASW has a national membership of approximately 4,000 members and the submission represents the views of 1109 (27%) members who responded to the survey. Of this number, 51.5% support mandatory registration, 15.7% oppose, 5% neither support nor oppose and 28% did not comment on whether they supported or opposed mandatory registration.
24. Although there appears to be a move internationally to mandatory social work registration, there has been little evaluation on how well mandatory registration for social work is working. There is also little evidence about the effects of registration on the profession.
25. Articles on general occupational regulation, however, tend to see registration as improving professionalism and standards, but only if the application of the registration system is consistent and enforced. There is little information internationally or nationally to ascertain the extent that people are at risk from poor social work practice.
26. Countries that have introduced mandatory social worker registration include: Brazil, Canada, England, France, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Finland, Japan, Lithuania, Northern Ireland, Russia, Romania, Scotland, Slovakia, South Africa, the majority of the United States, and Wales.
27. Through the thematic analysis of the feedback five key themes emerged. The number of respondents contributing to each theme varies significantly. In order to reflect this accurately, the number of respondents who commented within each theme is noted.
28. The following five key themes emerged:
  - Support for New Zealand to move towards mandatory social worker registration
  - Effects of mandatory registration
  - Public risk from poor social work practice
  - Transitional requirements
  - Whether the benefits of registration outweigh the costs

## Support for New Zealand to move towards mandatory social worker registration

29. Of the 422 submissions:
  - 399 (95%) are in support of moving towards mandatory registration
  - 23 (5%) are not in support of moving towards mandatory social worker registration (it was unclear from submissions whether these respondents supported any form of registration).
30. The main reason cited by respondents who support moving towards mandatory registration is that it will provide better protection for the public than the current voluntary registration system offers. Mandatory registration is viewed as an effective tool in ensuring that all social workers have consistent and universal competency, accountability and on-going skill development.
31. The main reason the 23 (5%) respondents who do not support moving to mandatory registration gave is that responsibility for ensuring safe practice should be with the employer, not a government organisation. The feedback for not supporting mandatory registration mainly centred on the negative impact on practitioners being required to meet registration requirements. No feedback was given identifying a negative impact on the safety of the public if mandatory registration was introduced.
32. Of the 422 submissions, 24 (7%) respondents commented on the importance of ensuring that mandatory registration be culturally appropriate and be used as a means to ensure quality social workers who can work across cultures as well as ensuring a mandatory bicultural approach that is universal for all social workers.

## Effects of Mandatory Registration

33. The perceived effects of mandatory registration provide the highest percentage of responses. Of the 422 submissions received:
  - 412 (98%) provide comments regarding the effects of mandatory registration. Of these respondents, many note both positive and negative effects.
  - 327 (79%) respondents note positive effects
  - 85 (21%) note negative effects in moving to mandatory registration.
34. The 327 (79%) respondents citing the positive effects of Mandatory Registration centred on increasing social work standards and accountability to provide safer practice for the public. The following are the most common positive effects cited:
  - provide compulsory minimum standards, accountability and qualification levels for all social workers
  - improving social work practice as practitioners meet, maintain and develop set social work standards
  - improving protection for vulnerable people by minimising the risk of poor social work practice
  - promoting the profession
  - enhancing public trust and confidence in the profession
  - providing a central register/complaints and disciplinary governing body
  - preventing unregistered social workers from practising
  - removing incompetent/unprofessional social workers from practice
  - bringing social work in-line with similar regulated professions
  - decreasing the cost of registration.

35. The 85 (21%) respondents citing the negative effects of Mandatory Registration did not cite any negative effects to public safety, or the quality of social work practice. Negative effects mainly centred on how mandatory registration will affect the employer or the social worker or the financial costs involved. The following are the most common negative effects cited:
- increased costs for employers/social worker
  - impact on good social workers who do not have a qualification
  - social work job titles changed to avoid registration costs
  - lack of qualified social workers in the social work workforce (particularly in rural areas).
36. Possible effects of mandatory registration on main employers of social workers. Many of the submissions comment on possible effects mandatory registration could have on social work employers. Main employers represented in the feedback are District Health Boards, NGOs, and Child, Youth and Family. Submissions received are from social workers, managers and Chief Executives.
37. **District Health Boards:** Of the 422 submissions received, 151 (36%) are identified as coming from individuals or groups employed by a District Health Board. Of these 151 submissions, 150 submissions (99%) are in support of mandatory registration.
38. **Non-Government Organisations (NGOs):** Of the 422 submissions, 67 (16%) are identified as coming from individuals or groups within the NGO sector. 63 (94%) are in support of moving towards mandatory registration and 4 (6%) against. Cost and transitional requirements of mandatory registration for NGOs, however, are noted by many NGO submissions as needing to be addressed prior to mandatory registration taking effect
39. **Child, Youth and Family:** 38 of the 422 submissions (9%) are identified as employees of Child, Youth and Family. 34 submissions (89%) are in support of mandatory registration and 4 (11%) against.

## Effects of Mandatory Registration

40. Of the 380 (90%) respondents commenting on whether there are current risks to the public from poor social work practice, 353 (93%) indicate public risk from poor social work practice can cause clients emotional and financial harm particularly when practice is concerning family violence, child protection, the elderly and mental health issues. Respondents saw moving to mandatory registration as an essential step to reduce public risks from poor social work practice.
41. The following are the most common reasons cited for the current public risk from poor social work practice:
- use of the title Social Worker by unqualified people
  - a lack of consistent professional standards and accountability in social work causing the quality of social work practice to vary significantly
  - social workers and employers of social workers not knowing what standards to expect
  - clients not being aware of what standards to expect from their social worker and not having access to an independent complaint process that covers all social workers
  - lack of adequate supervision, training and support for social workers.

## Transitional Requirements

42. Of the 422 submissions, 198 (47%) provide comment on the transitional requirements needed to ensure a successful move to mandatory registration. The main area of comment is on whether a transitional period is required. 130 (66%) support a set transitional period, and 36 (18%) advocate for immediate transition.
43. Respondents in support of a set transitional period see this as an opportunity for un-registered social workers to gain the requirements needed for registration and enable employers to support workers in this task.

44. Of the 130 submissions supporting a transition period, 106 (81 %) do not cite a specific time-period, only that one was required, and 24 (12%) cite a required transitional period of between one and five years.

## Whether the Benefits of Registration Outweigh the Costs

45. Of the 422 submissions received, 202 (48%) comment on whether the benefits of moving to registration would outweigh the costs.
- 186 (92%) respond that “yes” the benefits would outweigh costs,
  - 12 (6%) respond “no”
  - 4 (2%) are unsure.
46. Reasons given for why benefits would outweigh costs are:
- ensuring all social workers have high standards, competency, accountability and qualifications
  - increasing public confidence in social workers and the profession
  - improving practice and safety for the public
  - ensuring social work is in line with other professionals
  - reducing cost of registration
  - providing consequences for poor practice.
47. Cost of registration is the main reason cited for the costs outweighing benefits of mandatory registration.
48. **Additional comments:** Additional comments received through submissions on the discussion paper fall into the following four main themes:
- Alternatives to mandatory registration
  - Social work education
  - Section 13 of the Social Workers Registration Act
  - Role and functions of the ANZASW and the Board
49. **Alternatives to mandatory registration:** Of the 422 submissions received, 125 (30%) commented on whether there were alternatives to mandatory registration. 98 (78%) did not see an alternative that would best protect the public from poor social work practice and 27 (22%) suggested other alternatives that mainly focussed on self-regulation.
50. **Social work education:** Of the 422 submissions, 92 (22%) comment on the perceived low standards of social work education. This mainly focussed on the variation in graduate capability.
51. **Section 13 of the Social Workers Registration Act (2003):** Section 13 of the Act empowers the Board to decide if a person’s social work experience in New Zealand is enough to compensate for the lack of a Board-recognised qualification. Of the 422 submissions, 43 (10%) comment on whether section 13 should remain with 5% advocating equally for and against its retention.
52. **Role and functions of the ANZASW and the Board:** Of the 422 submissions, 12 (3%) indicate a lack of understanding of the role and functions of the ANZASW alongside that of the Board. A question was raised as to whether the ANZASW and the Board could work closer together to reduce membership/registration costs and provide a stronger united voice for social work.

## THE PUBLIC SURVEY

---

53. When the public were asked about their expectations in relation to occupations in New Zealand required by law to be registered 81 per cent of the public surveyed expected that registration was a requirement for Social Workers and that their names were publically available on a register.
54. When engaging with a social worker to assist them with personal or family problems 80 per cent of the public surveyed thought that Social Workers were required to have a minimum qualification to practice. Only 5% thought no tertiary qualification was required.
55. To the best of their knowledge, 78 per cent of the public thought a Social Worker was required to continue professional training to keep up to date with current practice.
56. In the event of a serious complaint about a social worker's behaviour or skills, 92 per cent of the public surveyed thought that they could make a complaint about a Social Workers practice to either one or multiple agencies. Of those that responded, 59 per cent were of the belief that they could complain to a Social Worker's employer, 40 per cent thought that they could complain to the Police and only 36 per cent were aware that they could complain to a government body or authority.  
  
55 per cent of the public thought that they could complain to the Social Workers professional association. It is not currently a requirement for Social Workers to belong to a professional association.
57. If after having a complaint investigated and upheld 88 per cent of the public thought that a Social Worker could be struck off or banned from practising social work, 83 per cent of the public thought that a Social Worker could be disciplined at work and 81 per cent of the public thought that a Social Worker could be required to undergo further training and supervision.

## SECTION TWO: BACKGROUND

58. This section:

- describes the current social work workforce and workforce trends;
- outlines the government's rationale for the current model of social worker registration and describes its key features; and
- provides a snapshot of registrations to date, including analysis by qualification, sector and ethnicity.

### The social work workforce

59. It is difficult to accurately establish the number of social work professionals in New Zealand. Social workers perform a variety of tasks and work in a number of different settings across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.

60. The international Federation of Social Work have as their definition of Social Work:

*The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilising theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work.*

61. The Board, like most regulatory authorities in New Zealand and overseas, has not attempted to define what social work is in terms of tasks but rather has defined the minimum criteria required to be registered as a social worker.

62. Under the Social Workers Registration Act, the following criteria are required for a person to gain social worker registration:

- a Board recognised New Zealand or overseas social work qualification (or, under section 13 of the act, enough social work experience in New Zealand to compensate for the lack of a Board-recognised qualification)
- assessed as competent to practise social work
- a fit and proper person to practise social work
- assessed as competent to practise social work with Māori
- assessed as competent to practise social work with different ethnic and cultural groups
- enough practical experience in practising social work.

63. The Board has determined that practising social work does not only involve direct interaction with clients but includes managing and/or supervising other social workers, teaching social work practice or theory and generally roles that utilise an individual's social work knowledge, skills, values and ethics.

64. Regulation through registration therefore helps to differentiate those who are practising professional social work from those who are undertaking other tasks in the social service sector. As Shaefor, Horejsi & Horejsi (1997) state, it is necessary to "differentiate it from philanthropic volunteerism; to emphasise orderly, responsible and disciplined activities."<sup>5</sup>

65. If an individual meets the minimum criteria to be registered then the Board expects that they should be registered and that they hold an annual practising certificate.

---

<sup>5</sup> Shaefor, B., Horejsi, C., & Horejsi, G. (1997) Techniques and Guidelines for Social Work Practice (3rd Edition) Needham Heights Allyn and Bacon

66. Data from the 2006 Census suggests that there are 13,170 people in the 'social worker' occupation classification.<sup>6</sup> This represents an increase of 2,769 from the 10,401 social workers recorded in the 2001 Census. However, these figures should be treated with caution as the Census counts many people who work in the generic 'caregiving' area, including child and youth development, family counselling etc. Further, it does not include some occupational groupings that could be considered to perform social work functions, such as probation officers.
67. The Board takes a more conservative approach to assessing the size of the social work workforce. Our estimate of the number of practising social workers who are likely to comprise the target group for registration could extend to 8,000. This is based on an estimate of the number of social workers employed in the health sector (primarily through District Health Boards); the number of social workers employed by the Child, Youth and Family Services; and an approximation of 'other' social workers operating in the non-government sector and in private practice.

## The rationale for a registration system for social workers

68. In 1999, the Government signalled its commitment to establishing a system for the registration of social workers in New Zealand. In July 2000 the Ministry of Social Policy (now the Ministry of Social Development) issued a discussion paper seeking public input into the design of a system for registration.
69. The Ministry of Social Policy assessed the social work occupation against the *Policy Framework for Occupational Regulation – A guide for government agencies involved in regulating occupations*.<sup>7</sup> The framework outlines three types of risk of occupation: the likelihood of significant harm occurring; the extent to which any harm caused is irreversible; and whether the risk is voluntarily entered into by the client.

70. The Ministry concluded that:

“Social work has the potential to be a moderate to high risk occupation. It is very difficult to assess the prevalence of poor social work practice. However, it is essential to protect the public from the outset by preventing poor practice and high risk situations from occurring. High risk situations may include misconduct, incompetence, malpractice or abuse.”<sup>8</sup>

This assessment supported the case for occupational regulation by government, rather than industry self-regulation.

71. Accordingly, the July 2000 discussion document stated that the aim of a social work registration system would be to:

- ensure safe practice in the social work occupation
- protect the public from poor social work practice
- maintain high levels of professionalism and accountability in the social work occupation.<sup>9</sup>

72. These objectives are reflected in Sections 3(a) and 3(d) of the Social Work Registration Act 2003:

The purpose of this Act is –

- (a) to protect the safety of members of the public, by prescribing or providing for mechanisms to ensure that social workers are –
  - (i) competent to practise; and
  - (ii) accountable for the way in which they practise;
- (d) to enhance the professionalism of social workers.

<sup>6</sup> Code 33411: New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations.

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Economic Development (website), Policy framework for Occupational Regulation: A guide for Government Agencies Involved in Regulating Occupations. Originally published by the then Ministry of Commerce in 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Ministry of Social Policy (July 2000) p.4.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Social Policy (July 2000) p.1.

73. Registration also provides a means to gain public recognition of the social work profession and the actions being taken to improve the quality of social work in New Zealand; and, ultimately, to increase public confidence in the work being done by social workers.
74. The registration framework provided for in the Act is the mechanism for ensuring that social workers are suitable for, and competent to, undertake the responsibilities and duties of social work.

## The voluntary registration model

Prior to the introduction of the Act, the government considered several models for the regulation of social work practice in New Zealand. The five main types of control government exercises through occupational regulation legislation<sup>10</sup> are:

|                 |                                                                                 |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Disclosure      | requiring disclosure of information about the service or service provider       |
| Registration    | requiring practitioners to identify themselves in a public way                  |
| Certification   | distinguishing particular types of service from other through protecting titles |
| Licensing tasks | restricting some tasks to particular members of an occupation                   |
| Licensing       | controls on entry to the occupation.                                            |

### Certification

76. The regulatory model adopted, and reflected in the Social Workers Registration Act 2003, is a form of certification. The Act establishes a voluntary system of registration and protects the title 'Registered Social Worker.' This means that only people who have been through the certification/ registration process are entitled to use the title 'Registered Social Worker.' The model does not preclude other people practising social work; however, they are not able to use the title 'Registered Social Worker.'
77. At the time of the introduction of the Social Workers Registration Bill to Parliament, the reason for recommending a voluntary registration system was that it was not viable to introduce mandatory registration immediately as a significant proportion of social workers currently practising would not immediately meet the criteria for registration. It was also considered unrealistic to expect that employers and individual social workers had the time and money to gain registration immediately.
78. As a result of considering this issue, the Select Committee recommended that as part of their regular review of the Act, the Social Workers Registration Board should specifically consider the extent to which the system of voluntary registration is achieving the purposes of the Act. The Bill was amended to reflect this decision.

## Key features of the current model

### Overview

79. The Social Workers Registration Act is an enabling piece of legislation. It made provision for the Social Workers Registration Board to be established and, once established, to determine much of the detail of the registration system (e.g. setting the policy on the level of qualification required for registration purposes).
80. The Act establishes five key components in the social work registration process:
  - recognised New Zealand qualification
  - fit and proper person
  - competence to practise social work

<sup>10</sup> Ministry of Economic Development (website), Policy framework for Occupational Regulation: A guide for Government Agencies Involved in Regulating Occupations.

- competence to practise social work with Māori and different ethnic and cultural groups
- practical experience.

These criteria are discussed in more detail below.

81. Once registered, social workers are required to recertify their competence to practise every five years. All practising registered social workers are required to hold a current practising certificate, which must be renewed annually.
82. The Act also contains provisions designed to enhance the professionalism of the social work occupation and to protect the public. In particular, all registered social workers are subject to a Code of Conduct and are held accountable for their practice through a Complaints and Disciplinary process. In addition, the Board is charged with promoting the benefits of registration to employers of social workers and the public, as well as to practising social workers; and to work with social work education and training providers to promote and set social work education and training standards.

### Criteria for registration

83. The Board has established criteria for each of the components in the social work registration process, and these have been disseminated through a series of published policy statements. In each case, the Board's policy was developed following extensive stakeholder consultation. The following section summarises the criteria for each component:<sup>11</sup>

- **Recognised New Zealand qualification** – The qualification benchmark is a Bachelors degree in Social Work or a postgraduate qualification in social work.<sup>12</sup> All applicants must hold one these recognised degrees, or have commenced study towards these to be considered for registration.

Qualifications gained overseas must be assessed as being equivalent to a recognised New Zealand qualification (noting that such qualifications may not include a component that ensures competence to practise social work with Māori and with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand).

Section 13 of the Act provides for the recognition of practical experience for applicants who do not hold a recognised New Zealand qualification in social work (or a recognised overseas qualification). In these circumstances the Board will take into account the range, length, quality and nature of the Social Work practical experience in making a decision based on the following criteria:

- i. The extent to which the applicant has practised social work in New Zealand.
- ii. The extent to which the applicant has practised social work internationally.
- iii. The extent to which the applicant is able to demonstrate that their practical experience compensates for the lack of a social work qualification.
- iv. The extent to which the applicant has participated in regular training and professional development relevant to social work in the course of their practice.
- v. The extent to which the applicant practised social work before the introduction of the Act.

Transitional provisions were put in place to allow for the recognition of current or historical New Zealand qualifications. A schedule of recognised qualifications for the purposes of registration was published. All applicants holding one of these qualifications were deemed to have met the qualification criteria and were not required to gain a further qualification.

- **Fit and proper person** – This requirement is normally met through a police check undertaken by the New Zealand Police Licensing and Vetting Service Centre, together with confidential references. The Board may also, from time to time, be required to make determinations

<sup>11</sup> Detail on the conditions around each of these criteria is contained in the full policy statements, available at [www.swrb.govt.nz](http://www.swrb.govt.nz)

<sup>12</sup> Recognised Bachelors degrees are in the fields of social work, applied social sciences or social practice. Two post-graduate diplomas are recognised: the Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Canterbury) and the Post-graduate Diploma in Social and Community work (Otago).

regarding fitness to practise on the grounds of medical or psychiatric conditions, a complaint and disciplinary finding, or a conviction.

- **Competence to practise social work** – The Board provides a competence assessment process and also recognises the components of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) competence assessment for members as fulfilling the Boards requirements for competence. Once registered, recertification of competence is required every five years and this process is, unless there is a requirement for a face to face assessment, paper-based only.

In August 2008 the Board introduced the Graduate Competence process whereby graduates of recognised social work qualifications are deemed to meet the competence requirements for registration and as such can obtain registration on entry to the workforce.

Graduate competence is embedded in the recognised social work programmes for students who graduate after 1 August 2008. This competence is valid for two years from the date of completing all the requirements of the recognised social work programme. This competence entitles graduates to provisional (Section 10) registration. A full competence assessment must be completed for full (Section 12) registration

- **Competence to practise social work with Māori and Competence to practise social work with different ethnic and cultural groups** – This is based on the inclusion of an appropriate component within the recognised qualification and/or as the result of completing a separate course or courses of training. The competence is also tested as a part of the general competence assessment and is a requirement for the Annual Practising Certificate.
- **Practical experience** – Applicants for full registration must have completed 2000<sup>13</sup> hours supervised practice, post qualification. (Experience prior to 1 October 2004 can be recognised in years, rather than hours – i.e. practised for two years at more than 15 hours per week). 2000 hours is approximately 18 months of full time practice, which enables a provisionally registered social worker to achieve full registration within the two years specified for provisional registration under section 10 (3) (a) of the Act.

84. In addition to these general requirements for full registration, Board policies allow for provisional registration and temporary registration:

- **Provisional registration** – Applicants who can meet competence and fit and proper requirements can obtain provisional registration while they meet the requirements of completing a recognised social work qualification and / or sufficient practical experience. Provisional registration is renewable at the discretion of Board, every two years, up to a total of no more than eight years. (The qualification must be completed within that timeframe).
- **Temporary Registration** – Overseas applicants visiting New Zealand temporarily, who have suitable knowledge and experience and meet other specified minimum requirements, may obtain temporary registration. Temporary registration is renewable every six months, up to a total of no more than three years. Persons registered temporarily must always be registered subject to restrictions relating to the institution or place where they intend to practise.

## Complaints and disciplinary procedures

85. Registered social workers are also subject to complaints and disciplinary procedures, established under Part 4 of the Act. The Board has established the Social Workers Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal; and related Complaint Assessment Committees will be established as needed in response to specific cases. The complaints and disciplinary procedures serve to hold registered social workers accountable for the way they practise and are a key mechanism for protecting public safety. The Board has also established a Code of Conduct and supporting guidelines, in consultation with stakeholders.

<sup>13</sup> 2000 hours has been calculated as a full-time new graduate social worker working 30 hours per week, actual hands-on practice for 40 to 45 weeks per annum. Transitional provisions recognised experience gained prior to 1 October 2004 in terms of years (two years minimum of 15 hours per week).

## Effect of current legislative and policy settings

86. In summary, the effect of these legislative provisions and policies is that (subject to demonstrating fitness and competence) full registration is available to:

- Social workers with a degree level qualification and sufficient practical experience;
- Social workers with a recognised diploma level qualification (commenced or completed prior to 31 December 2005) and sufficient practical experience;
- Social workers practising prior to the introduction of the Act but who do not hold a recognised qualification can be registered if the range, length, quality and nature of their Social Work practical experience meets the Board's minimum criteria as set out in the Section 13 Social Work Practice Framework; and
- Overseas-qualified social workers who meet a range of conditions including demonstrated competence and sufficient experience (provided that their qualification is equivalent to a recognised New Zealand qualification).

Provisional registration is available to:

- social workers with sufficient experience to demonstrate general competence, provided they are working towards meeting the criteria they do not yet meet (a recognised qualification and/or minimum specified practical experience requirements); or
- to new graduates entering social work who are still gaining sufficient experience to demonstrate competence to the required standard.

## A snap-shot of registrations to date

### Registrations by sector

87. Social workers employed in the public sector are disproportionately over-represented in the number of social work registrations, accounting for 57% of total registrations, while comprising approximately one third of the total social work workforce. This over-representation may be attributed in part to a 'culture' of professional registration, which is particularly strong in the health sector, and is becoming well developed in Child, Youth and Family Service of the Ministry of Social Development.

Further, it is evident that many employers in this sector are committed to meeting the costs of registration of their social workers.

Over 3600 social workers have been registered:

- 30% of these are employed by Child, Youth and Family Services
- 26% are employed by DHBs
- 20% are employed in the NGO sector
- 6% are self-employed
- 4% are employed in the education sector
- 1% are employed in the wider government sector
- 11% are currently identifying as not practising.

88. In contrast, social workers employed by NGOs are underrepresented, accounting for approximately half of the social work workforce, while comprising only 30% of total registrations. Findings from a study of the barriers to and incentives/benefits of registration for social workers employed in NGOs, indicate that the cost of registration is the major disincentive, unless their employing organisation meets the costs.

## Qualifications

The majority of registered social workers hold a qualification:

New Zealand Recognised Social Work Qualifications:

- Diploma of Social Work (1344)
- Bachelor of Social Work (1046)
- Post Graduate Diploma (162)
- Master of Social Work (303)

Overseas Qualifications deemed Equivalent to a New Zealand Recognised Social Work Qualification:

- Overseas Qualification (416)

91 social workers have provisional registration based on working towards completion of a New Zealand Recognised Social Work Qualification.

142 social workers have been registered under the provisions of section 13 (i.e. Practical Experience recognised as compensating for not holding a New Zealand Recognised Social Work Qualification)

89. At the time the Act came into effect, transitional measures were established to allow for the recognition of a range of historical and existing qualifications. However, from January 2006, a social worker must have a minimum of a recognised Bachelor's degree or a post-graduate qualification, or have commenced study towards these in order to be considered for registration.<sup>14</sup> In effect, all social workers new to the profession must have at least a degree at Bachelor level to be considered for registration. This policy was developed in the interests of 'raising the bar' in qualification standards.

## Ethnicity

90. Based on analysis of the sample group of approximately 3500 registered social workers 76% of registered social workers are of 'European' ethnicity, 20% are Māori and 3% are of Pacific Island ethnicity.

---

<sup>14</sup> Under transitional provisions, the Board may register a social worker with a recognised diploma level qualification, so long as they completed or commenced study towards it prior to 31 December 2005.

# SECTION THREE: ANALYSIS

## Analytical framework

91. This section considers how effectively the current statutory provisions and the Board’s policies contribute to the achievement of the purposes of the Act.
92. The principal focus of this analysis is to consider the extent to which the Social Workers Registration Act and the system of voluntary registration it provides for are:
- *protecting the safety of members of the public, by prescribing or providing for mechanisms to ensure that social workers are –*
    - i competent to practise; and*
    - ii accountable for the way in which they practise; and*
  - *enhancing the professionalism of social workers.*

We have identified four guiding principles that underscore our analysis:

|                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Recommendations for change should be realistic and pragmatic.   | The registration system should take into account the current demands on the profession and current skill levels. It should be affordable and not impose unnecessary compliance costs on social workers and their employers. The emphasis must be on raising overall standards over time.                                 |
| Changes should recognise and build on progress to date.         | A move to a mandatory registration system should build on the Board’s efforts to “raise the bar” for qualification levels.                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| The registration system should be simple and accessible.        | To be effective, the system must be readily understood by all stakeholders and by clients in particular.                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| The registration system must align with other relevant sectors. | Social workers have close working relationships with other professionals. Often this involves working as part of a multi-disciplinary team. Operating within similar frameworks and to similar professional and ethical standards will enhance both day to day working, and the professional standing of social workers. |

## Issue identification

93. The Act provides a framework for protecting public safety and enhancing the professionalism of social workers.

The public safety objectives are achieved through ensuring registered social workers are fit and proper, and competent to practise. This, in turn, is to be achieved by setting standards for initial registration, and through providing an operating environment where the expectations are clear, and mechanisms are in place to hold registered social workers to account when those expectations are not met.

The enhancing of professionalism is achieved through a framework of continuing professional development, competence assessment and review and promotion of high standards.

94. Ultimately, levels of both public safety and professionalism will be influenced by a combination of the following elements:
- **Registration standards and systems for establishing and maintaining competence:**  
Standards include defined levels of qualifications, experience, and competence, and an

assessment that a candidate is a fit and proper person to practise social work. Systems include annual practising certificates and systems for maintaining and assessing ongoing competence. Competence must include competence to practise social work with Māori and with different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand;

- **Effective accountability systems:** These include the Code of Conduct and the Complaints and Disciplinary system as well as employer-based standards and systems such as in-house complaints procedures available to clients;
- **Promotion of high standards of practice and stakeholder awareness:** To be effective, employers, social workers and clients must be informed about, and value, the registration system; and
- **Coverage:** Increasing the proportion of social workers that are registered will influence the overall level of public safety.

95. The following section considers each of these elements in turn, identifies the key issues and sets out the Board's view on the operational and legislative changes needed to better achieve the purposes of the Act.

### **Registration standards and systems for establishing and maintaining competence**

The Board has, in consultation with stakeholders, established standards and developed policies on:

- Entitlement to Registration – Competence
- Competence to Practise Social Work with Māori
- Competence to Practise Social Work with Different Ethnic and Cultural Groups
- Enough Practical Experience
- Criteria for Section 7 Registration (Overseas Qualified)
- Criteria for Section 10 Registration (Provisional)
- Criteria for Section 11 Registration (Temporary)
- Criteria for Section 12 Registration (Full)
- Criteria for Section 13 Registration (Unqualified)
- Fit and Proper
- English language competence and English language testing
- Renewal of Annual Practising Certificate
- Continuing Professional Development for Registered Social Workers
- Supervision Expectations for Registered Social Workers
- Recognised New Zealand social work qualifications
- The process for recognition/re-recognition of social work qualifications in New Zealand

These standards contribute to high levels of public safety in respect of registered social workers (whether fully or provisionally registered). They are also designed to ensure that social workers who obtain and maintain full registration meet high standards of professionalism.

96. **Entry requirements:** The current system provides for three levels of registration: provisional; temporary; and full registration. This framework enables social workers who do not initially qualify for full registration, but who can meet the fit and proper person and competence requirements, to participate in the registration system and become subject to its code of conduct and accountable to the professional development provisions while they work towards achieving full registration.

97. **Competence assessment:** The current competence system involves an initial competence assessment. The Board provides a competence assessment process and also recognises the components of the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) competence assessment for members, as fulfilling the Boards requirements for competence.

Once registered, recertification of competence is required every five years and this process is, unless there is a requirement for a face to face assessment, paper-based only. The Board charges \$255.55 for an initial full competence assessment and \$153.32 for a five yearly recertification. Both assessments are paper based.

In order to be assessed by ANZASW, social workers must pay to become members of ANZASW and also pay for a competence assessment. The ANZASW competence assessment costs \$256.00 for paper based and up to \$409.00 for a face to face assessment. Social workers must continue to hold membership, which involves a yearly fee of \$284 (\$227 for income up to \$39,999.99 p/a), in order to have the 5 yearly recertification assessed at no cost. If they do not maintain membership over the five years the recertification cost is \$153.00.

The Board considers there is scope to reduce the complexity of the current processes to evidence competence.

98. In New Zealand, for many professions a formal competence assessment is only initiated in response to an identified concern about competence. The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, for example, allows for a competence programme to be set but this is not a compulsory requirement for practitioners registered with the sixteen<sup>15</sup> responsible regulatory authorities under that Act.
99. Fee levels: The current application for registration fee is \$368. Social workers may also be required to pay for a competence assessment (\$255.55).

There is provision for a disciplinary levy in the legislation although this has not been imposed for the last three years and would only be required in exceptional circumstances.

The Annual Practising Certificate (\$368) is a yearly cost, only while the social worker is practising. A competence recertification is required on a five yearly cycle at a cost of \$153.32

100. Registration costs for many other New Zealand professionals are significantly lower than for social workers. For example, a teacher's initial registration fee is \$220 and their practising certificate requires renewal every three years at a cost of \$220. Nurses pay a registration fee of \$75 and an annual practising certificate fee of \$110.
101. Social workers employed in the public sector are disproportionately over-represented in the number of social worker registrations and NGOs are under-represented. The cost of registration was the main reason cited by respondents who believed that the cost of mandatory registration outweighed the benefits.
102. The belief that the cost of Mandatory Registration outweighs the benefits is however a comparison that is made on current fee levels where a minority of social workers are supporting a regulatory body for the majority.

Given this view it is important for the profession to realise that Mandatory registration would result in an instant financial benefit to the profession and employers by the sheer economy of scale achieved by having all eligible social workers registered.

---

<sup>15</sup> Chiropractic Board, Dental Council, Dietitians Board, Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand, Medical Radiation Technologists Board, Medical Council, Midwifery Council, Nursing Council, Occupational Therapy Board, Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board, Osteopathic Council, Pharmacy Council, Physiotherapy Board, Podiatrists Board, Psychologists Board, Psychotherapists Board.

103. The Board has calculated that the cost of maintaining registration would decrease to around one half of the current cost and the following example best illustrates the benefit of mandatory registration to employers across the profession.

*A Manager of a social work agency has 30 staff that should be registered under a mandatory scheme.*

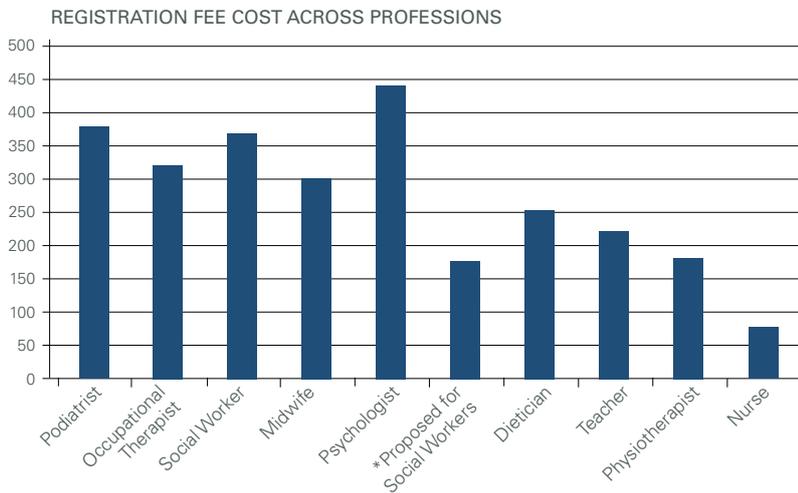
*Currently, under the voluntary registration scheme, 15 of these are registered at an annual cost of \$5,520 incl. GST (15 x \$368).*

*If registration became mandatory and the cost was reduced to only a half of the current cost, all 30 social work staff could be registered for the same amount \$5,520 incl. GST (30 x \$184).*

*The cost of registering all 30 staff at a third of the current cost would be \$3,690 incl. GST (30 x \$123).*

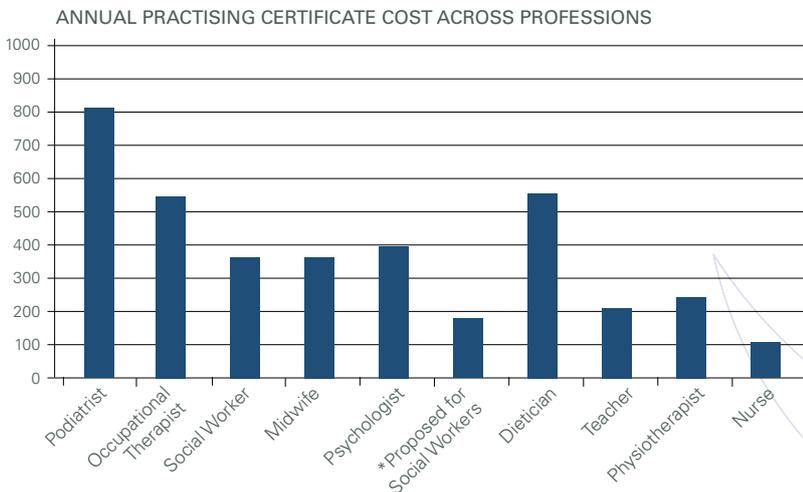
104. Figures One, Two and Three provide a broad overview of registration costs for a range of occupations. The table shows that social worker registration costs are at the high end of the range for comparable groups.

### Figure One: Registration Fees



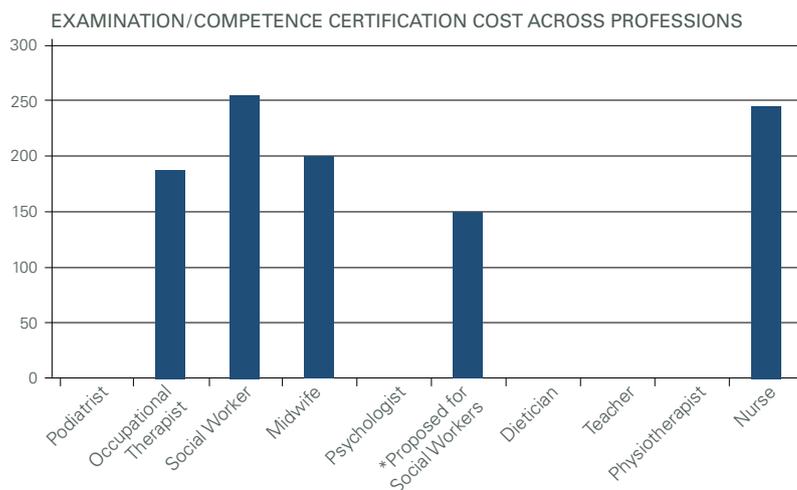
\* Expected Fee for Social Workers under Mandatory Registration

### Figure Two: Annual Practising Certificate Fees



\* Expected Fee for Social Workers under Mandatory Registration

**Figure Three: Examination/Competence Certification Fees**



\* Expected Fee for Social Workers under Mandatory Registration

105. This data provides a broad set of comparisons, but must be treated with caution as each system is different. For example, figures for social workers include the minimum cost of an initial competence assessment (\$255.55), whereas ongoing competence costs are \$153.32 for each subsequent five year period.

They do not, however, reflect the cost of ANZASW membership or ANZASW competence costs (at least for the year in which the competence assessment is undertaken), which is a requirement in order to obtain an ANZASW assessment.

On the other hand, as no Annual Practising Certificate fee is levied in the year of first registration for Social Workers, the true cost of registration in the first 12 months of registration will vary, depending on the date of registration.

### Effective accountability systems

106. The Board has established a Code of Conduct and supporting guidelines. All registered social workers are provided with a copy of these and additional copies are available through the Board's website. Social work employers and educators have also been provided with this documentation.

107. Further, the Board has established an independent Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal, supported by a Complaints Assessment Committee system, to process any complaints against registered social workers.

109. The Board's accountability systems are designed to provide effective guidance to registered social workers and hold them to account when a complaint to the Board is upheld. Individuals who do not meet the minimum criteria for registration are not held to account under the Act.

110. In addition to promoting registration and professional standards the Board, under sub-section 99 (1) k, has the function of promoting, to social worker employing organisations, the establishment of "accessible and efficient procedures for making, considering, and determining complaints relating to social workers they employ." Although this provides the Board with another means of enhancing public safety within the voluntary regime, employer based processes will not provide the same level of accountability as the Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal – the Tribunal has specific powers such as the ability to fine, strike off the register, etc.

111. Nevertheless, employer based processes are an essential component of an overall public safety and accountability regime – in part because issues should ideally be resolved, as far as possible, through 'normal channels' in the first instance.

112. The Board considers public safety would be enhanced by simple, good quality employer based complaints systems, to complement the SWRB Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal system. The

Board could undertake a promotion and development function<sup>16</sup> to support this, but would require specific Government funding to do so.

### Promotion of high standards of practice and stakeholder awareness

112. To date the Board has focused its promotional role primarily on communicating with social workers, employers and educators, rather than with the public and social workers' clients. This emphasis reflects the need to work closely with a range of stakeholders including employers and educators to promote high standards of practice and to actively promote registration in the context of a voluntary system. Promotion has been through meetings, newsletters and other communications to the sector.
113. To be effective, however, the system must also be readily understood and valued by all its users, including clients and the public.

It is important that the public and clients understand the registration system and how it can contribute to the standards and safety of services. The current voluntary system of registration is confusing to the public and will remain so until all social workers are required to register against the same set of criteria. Raising public and client awareness would be an important function to ensure the smooth introduction of mandatory registration.

114. The Board considers there is scope for greater promotional activity, both to encourage high standards of practice and to promote stakeholder awareness, but this would require specific funding. The Board does not think it is appropriate to fund this broader activity through fees paid by registered social workers.

115. Costs associated with this function may include:

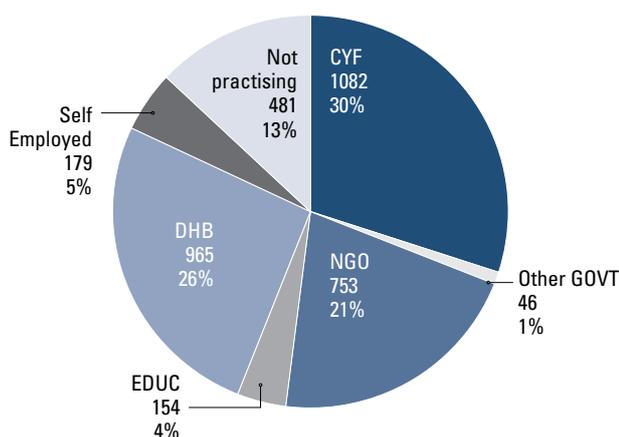
- development, printing and dissemination of material to the profession promoting and encouraging social workers to register, encouraging employers to support mandatory registration, information on the Code of Conduct, professional standards, complaints procedures, etc.;
- development, printing and dissemination of material to the public advising of mandatory social worker registration, the Code of Conduct, client rights, complaints procedures, etc.; and
- developing and providing opportunities for registered social workers to maintain and increase their professional development to ensure the enhancement of the professionalism of social workers in general.

116. The Board believes public safety can only be adequately supported by a mandatory registration system.

### Coverage

117. Figure Four provides information on the number of Registered Social Workers by employer.

**Figure Four: Number of Registered Social Workers by Employer with Percentage of 3660 Total Registered Social Workers**



<sup>16</sup> For example, standards and guidelines could be developed to assist smaller employers of social workers to establish complaints systems where these do not exist.

118. A mandatory registration system would ensure all social workers are required to be competent, adhere to a code of conduct and are assessed to be fit and proper persons to practise social work.
- The public and clients would be assured that any social worker they deal with has been assessed as fit and proper, competent to practise social work and that there is an independent mechanism to deal with incompetence or malpractice. This cannot be achieved under a voluntary system.
119. Many other professions that work alongside social workers (e.g. nurses, doctors, psychologists, teachers and other allied health professionals) operate under mandatory registration systems. Consequently, a mandatory system would also enhance alignment with related professions.
120. Countries that have introduced mandatory social worker registration include: Brazil, Canada, England, France, Hong Kong, Iceland, Israel, Finland, Japan, Lithuania, Northern Ireland, Russia, Romania, Scotland, Slovakia, South Africa, the majority of the United States, and Wales.
121. The title of “social worker” has been protected in the UK since 2005. All social workers must be registered to comply with the law, which makes it a criminal offence to use the title or operate as a social worker without registration. This requirement impacts not only on people using the title “social worker”; but also affects people in roles that require a social work qualification, or involve work normally only undertaken by a social worker. Students studying for a social work degree may also be registered. Student social workers are required to meet verification of identity, good character and health requirements.<sup>17</sup>
122. The United States and Canadian provisions vary from state to state, and from province to province. Registration is mandatory in all Canadian provinces. All provinces have title protection, and most regulate practice. Some, but not all, US states restrict the use of the title “social worker” to licensed practitioners. The Association of Social Work Boards has established a database containing the basic elements of social work regulation in the 50 U.S. states, 10 Canadian provinces, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico ([www.aswb.org](http://www.aswb.org)).<sup>18</sup>
123. In Hong Kong any person who uses the title “social worker” or related descriptions is required to be registered.
124. The current framework could be readily adapted to a mandatory registration system under which all social workers must obtain registration to practise.
125. The Board considers that limiting a mandatory system to particular parts of the social sector workforce could create disincentives to continue to work in those environments and exacerbate current skill shortages in critical areas.
126. Although a proportion of the current social work workforce may not currently meet the Board’s standards, introducing a mandatory registration system need not involve compromising enhanced professionalism, or creating a hierarchy of social work categories. Comprehensive public safety and accountability can readily be achieved by extending the current system of provisional registration to all social workers who meet minimum entry level competence requirements, and are willing and able to work towards full registration.
127. A system that allows greater access to provisional registration (provided minimum competencies are met) would recognise the current state of the social sector workforce, while still creating clear development expectations and maintaining very high professional standards for fully registered social workers. Such a system would build on progress to date by reinforcing the standards established for full registration.
128. This would only be achieved through protection of the title “social worker” and requiring that functions normally performed exclusively by social workers cannot be performed by unregistered persons (UK model).

<sup>17</sup> The Care Standards Act 2000 is the foundation legislation. The Health and Care Professions Council is the regulator of the social care workforce in England, set up to promote high standards in social care and to protect the public. Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have similar bodies.

<sup>18</sup> Tables available include information on board structure, levels of practice, minimum requirements for licensure, exemptions, supervisory qualifications, reciprocity/endorsement, continuing education, privileged communication, practice definitions and other elements.

129. We consider that by utilising the current registration framework we can move quickly to a comprehensive registration system that is inclusive. Rather than expecting all social workers to be fully registered, the prerequisite to practise would be to at least have provisional registration, and be committed to an ongoing programme of competence development.

In effect, the requirement would be for all persons practising social work to have met minimum entry level standards of competence and have been assessed as fit and proper.

All social workers would then be subject to the Social Worker Code of Conduct and to the Complaints and Disciplinary system. They would also all be committed to ongoing professional development.

130. We recommend the Government amend the Social Workers Registration Act to provide for a mandatory social worker registration system through protection of the title "social worker" and by requiring that functions normally performed exclusively by social workers cannot be performed by unregistered persons.<sup>19</sup> (Other registered professionals, such as health practitioners, undertaking social work tasks as part of their normal professional activities would not be required to register as social workers).

131. The Board's view is that, in the interests of maintaining minimum professional standards, only those with minimum specified levels of experience, or who have obtained recognised qualifications, should be entitled to use the title "social worker". Before achieving even limited registration, social workers should be able to demonstrate competence, based on either a portfolio of at least 2000 hours (eighteen months) experience and / or the achievement of a recognised qualification.

132. The Board notes that the both the Care Standards Act 2000 (UK) and Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 provide models on which such an approach could be broadly based.

133. The Board has developed a draft proposal on the general principle of mandatory registration and would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of specific amendments to give effect to this recommendation.

134. To date over 3600 social workers and their employers have engaged in the process and the Board is confident in the processes and procedures developed, reviewed and maintained over almost a decade. The Board secretariat is prepared for, and would effectively accommodate, mandatory registration and the expected numbers who would be eligible to apply.

135. Our main conclusion is that a system of public safety and social worker accountability will only be achieved through a legislated requirement for the mandatory registration of all social workers.

---

<sup>19</sup> The UK's Care Standards Act 2000 provides a model for this approach. The Act provides for the protection of the title "social worker" by the creation of an offence, punishable by a fine of up to £5000, for a person who is not registered as a social worker to use that title or hold themselves out as a registered social worker with an intention to deceive.

In interpreting this provision, the General Social Care Council advise that: "Registration is not optional. It is illegal for someone to call themselves a social worker with intent to deceive unless they are registered, and the police can investigate such cases. This affects people with 'social worker' in their job title, but also people in roles which require a social work qualification or which involve work normally only undertaken by social workers."

# SECTION FOUR: IMPLEMENTATION

The Board's view is that a two staged implementation could occur as follows:

## STAGE ONE:

---

### Consider amendments to the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 to provide for protection of title for Social Worker

136. The SWR Act 2003 would allow for mandatory registration with little change to the current legislation apart from the introduction of a section, providing protection of title to Social Worker, such as the following which is based on similar mandatory registration legislation:

*Unqualified person must not claim to be a social worker*

*(1) A person may only use names, words, titles, initials, abbreviations, or descriptions stating or implying that the person is a social worker of a particular kind if the person is registered, and is qualified to be registered, as a social worker of that kind.*

*(2) No person may claim to be practising as a social worker of a particular kind or state or do anything that is calculated to suggest that the person practises or is willing to practise as a social worker of that kind unless the person—*

*(a) is a social worker of that kind; and*

*(b) holds a current practising certificate as a social worker of that kind.*

*(3) No person may make an express or implied statement about another person that the other person is prohibited by subsection (1) or subsection (2) from making about himself or herself.*

*(4) Subsection (2) does not prohibit a person from stating his or her willingness to practise a profession for the purposes of seeking employment if the person is, or would on obtaining that employment be, qualified to be registered as a social worker and to hold a current practising certificate as a social worker.*

*(5) Every person commits an offence punishable on summary conviction by a fine not exceeding \$10,000 who contravenes this section.<sup>20</sup>*

### Consider amendments to the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 as a result of the Review of the operation of the Act and the Board's own operations

137. Minor amendments to sections currently in the Act would also be included at this time to ensure consistency and efficiency.

138. These would include, but not be limited to, such amendments as:

- Reducing the number of Board members from 10 to 8 taking into account that the larger Board of 10 members was needed at the time to develop policy and procedures but the Board can now operate effectively with 8 members.
- Placing a time limit on the availability of Section 13. Section 13 currently allows social workers with extensive practical social work experience prior to the implementation of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 to be registered. This extensive practical experience is assessed to ensure that it compensates for the lack of a recognised social work qualification. Access to recognised social work qualifications is available throughout the University, Wananga and Polytechnic sector and a qualification is now the accepted standard for social work employment.
- Amend Section 13 to allow for recognition of practical experience in practising social work, prior to the implementation of the SWR Act 2003, outside of New Zealand.

---

<sup>20</sup> This is the fine currently stated in section 148 of the SWR Act 2003

- Remove Section 14 (2) from the Act, and any references to this, as it allows for registration with only the intention to meet minimum criteria.
- Sections to be introduced to clearly define Student Registration and Criteria for Student Registration as separate from Provisional Registration.
- Amend the criteria for Provisional Registration to allow for overseas qualified registrants to practise under supervision as they develop the competencies to practise social work with Māori and different ethnic and cultural groups in New Zealand.
- Clarify the irregularities in the Act with reference to timeframes to complete competence assessments – 5 years as opposed to a timeframe within 4 years and 9 months and 5 years and 3 months.
- Allow for the Board to provide an interim Practising Certificate for a limited time to recognise instances where social workers are returning to practise or for particular reasons are unable to complete a competence assessment in the timeframe prescribed e.g. ill health. Board given discretion to issue Practising Certificates.
- Consider an amendment to Section 50, the section that requires the Board to undertake police checks, to allow for an exemption to the Clean Slate Act provisions.
- Amend section 25 of the Act to read that no social worker may *practise*, be employed or be engaged as social worker. The Board has determined that practising social work does not only involve direct interaction with clients but includes managing and/or supervising other social workers, teaching social work practice or theory and generally roles that utilise an individual's social work knowledge, skills, values and ethics.

## STAGE TWO:

---

### **Define a timeframe for eligible social workers to become registered.**

139. Social Workers who currently meet the minimum criteria for registration would be required to register within 18 months of the decision to make registration of social workers mandatory. This would give social workers and their employers time to apply for registration and incorporate the costs into their budgets.
140. The Board plans to introduce a decreased fee based on the known number of social workers who would be required to register.

### **Inform Social Workers and the employers of Social Workers who would be required to become registered and when.**

141. It is the view of the Board that practising social work does not only involve direct interaction with clients but includes managing and/or supervising other social workers, teaching social work practice or theory and generally roles that utilise an individual's social work knowledge, skills, values and ethics.
142. The Board has spent considerable time reviewing the implementation processes utilised by social work regulatory authorities overseas and will consider many of the issues already experienced by those countries with mandatory registration. The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) in England and the Social Care Councils in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are responsible for the registration of social workers and provide excellent case studies on how to proceed.
143. The HCPC and the Social Care Councils note that there are a range of job titles that do not have the title 'social worker' in them but which describe roles that involve a substantial amount of social work. These include roles with titles such as 'practice manager', 'senior practitioner', 'team manager' and 'service manager'.
144. Where such titles or descriptions imply Registered Social Worker status, or people filling such roles may describe themselves as social workers, then the roles need to be filled by Registered Social Workers.

145. Where a person is required to hold a social work qualification or there is a reference to social work in the role description, registration would avoid any risk of an offence being committed.
146. The public will be advised about what they can expect of a social worker and must not be misled about the nature of a person's registration status, qualification or role by avoiding the title Social Worker and therefore registration.

### **Social Service Sector Roles**

147. There are also a diverse range of roles in the social service sector other than that of the social worker, some of which may involve small elements of social work. These include roles described as 'care managers', 'case managers', 'welfare workers', 'probation officers', 'youth workers' and 'community support workers', etc.
148. The legislation does not restrict the range of work carried out in social service sector roles, but it is designed to ensure that only Registered Social Workers use the title or hold themselves out as social workers.
149. In reviewing the implementation processes utilised by social work regulatory authorities overseas the Board noted that in Alberta, Canada, the Health Professions Act 1999 used an internationally accepted definition of social work practice to inform social workers and their employers who was expected to be registered.
150. Under the Canadian Health Professions Act 1999 Social Work registration would be required if
  - (a) you hold a recognised social work qualification; and
  - (b) you work with the public; or
  - (c) you supervise people who work with the public; or
  - (d) you teach in a social work education programme; and
  - (e) in your practice, you do one or more of the following:
    - (i) enhance or restore the social functioning of individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities by improving developmental, problem-solving and coping capacities of people and systems;
    - (ii) promote effective and humane systems that provide resources, opportunities and services to people and link people to those systems;
    - (iii) contribute to the development and improvement of social policy; and
    - (iv) provide restricted activities authorised by statutory regulations pertaining to their position.
151. If a social worker's practice involves any of the above, they are active in social work.

### **Inform those individuals who are not eligible to use the title Social Worker, and their employers, of what would be required to become registered and how.**

152. Mandatory registration of social workers is required to ensure that individuals without a social work qualification (or enough practical experience that compensates for the lack of a social work qualification) do not undertake social work practice with vulnerable members of the public.
153. Those individuals currently using the title of Social Worker without the required qualification or experience would be required to use another title that clearly identified to the public that they were not Registered Social Workers.
154. In the Board's view this approach would allow persons who are clearly undertaking core social work activities to not simply reclassify their job title.

Nevertheless it is unlikely that all the 13,170 people identified as social workers in the 2006 Census will become registered social workers.

The Board estimates the number of practising social workers who are likely to comprise the target group for registration as social workers could extend to 8,000.

This is based on an estimate of the number of social workers employed in the health sector (primarily through District Health Boards); the number of social workers employed by the Child, Youth and Family Services; and an approximation of 'other' social workers operating in the non-government sector and in private practice.

## Recommendations to the Minister for Social Development:

The Board recommends that the Government:

1. **Agree to amend the Social Workers Registration Act (2003) to provide for a mandatory system of social worker registration through protection of the title "social worker" and by requiring that functions normally performed by social workers cannot be performed by unregistered persons;**
2. **Agree that policy work should be undertaken as soon as possible because of the potentially long lead time for legislative change.**

Early decisions and announcements of the Government's legislative intentions could add significant impetus to engagement in the registration system by employers and social workers.

Subject to the Minister's support for this recommendation, the Board will commence scoping work, in consultation with the Ministry of Social Development and others, on defining the scope of coverage of a mandatory registration system based on protection of the title "social worker" and associated limitations on who can practise social work.

## Appendix A

### Groups and Organisations that made Submissions

- Age Concern Auckland
- ANZASW (NATIONAL)
- ANZASW Manawatu-Whanganui Branch
- Auckland District Health Board, Community Child Health & Disability Service
- Barnardos New Zealand
- Child, Youth and Family
- Council for Social Work Education
- District Health Board Health Social Work Leaders Council
- District Health Board Social Work Leaders Group, Lower North Island Regional
- Fostering Kids: Whangai Whakatairangi
- Hawke's Bay District Health Board, Social Work Service
- Health Workforce New Zealand
- Lakes District Health Board Social Work Group
- Māori Party
- Massey University, School of Health and Social Services social work staff (Turitea campus)
- National Director of Allied Health, Scientific & Technical Professions
- Nelson Marlborough District Health Board – Clinical services support directorate
- New Zealand Council Of Christian Social Services
- Ngāpuhi Iwi Social Services
- Northland District Health Board, Social Workers, Dargaville Hospital
- Open Home Foundation – Lower Hutt
- Open Home Foundation of New Zealand
- PANIC (Positive Action Needed in Crisis) and the Auckland Single Parent's Trust
- PSA (Public Service Association)
- Social Service Providers Aotearoa Inc (SSPA)
- Southern District Health Board, Mental Health Directorate
- Southern District Health Board, Social Work Professional Leaders
- Southland Family Works
- Te Pou (the national centre of mental health research, information and workforce development)
- Te Puna Whaiora (The Children's Health Camps Foundation)

- Te Wananga o Aotearoa
- The Methodist Mission, employees
- UNICEF
- University of Auckland , School of Counselling, Human Services and Social Work, social work team
- Waikato District Health Board in consultation with Clinical Leaders in social work
- Wesley Community Action
- Whitireia Polytechnic, Year 2 Bachelor of Social Work students
- Youth Horizons Trust
- Youthlink Family Trust

## Appendix B – Feedback form

### MANDATORY REGISTRATION DISCUSSION DOCUMENT RESPONSE

---

You are invited to respond to the following questions to provide feedback and if you need more room attach additional copies of this form or additional pages:

In the social work profession are there any problems, or potential problems, with protecting the public against poor social work practice? If yes, what are they?

---

---

---

---

---

Are there any risks to public safety by maintaining the status quo? If yes, what are they?

---

---

---

---

---

Is mandatory registration the best solution for providing the public with protection against poor social work practice?

---

---

---

---

---

Are there other ways to work within the current voluntary registration system to better provide for public safety and ensure that social workers are competent to practise, maintain that competence through continuing professional development and are accountable for their practice? If yes, what are they?

---

---

---

---

---

Do you consider there will be improvements in moving to mandatory registration? If so, what will they be?

---

---

---

---

Do you consider there will be any negative effects in moving to mandatory registration? If so, what will they be? How can these negative effects be addressed?

---

---

---

---

---

Do you think that the costs of moving to mandatory registration will outweigh the benefits, or will the benefits outweigh the costs? How?

---

---

---

---

---

If mandatory registration were introduced, what transitional measure(s) would be needed to ensure that any risks to social work services were managed?

---

---

---

---

---

Is there anything else you would like to comment on with regard to Mandatory Registration for Social Workers?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Print Name :

Date:

Please provide your contact details so that we can provide you with updated information on the outcome of the discussion document and review of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.

### Contact Details

Postal Address:

Email Address:

**Thank you for taking the time to respond – please use the enclosed freepost envelope to return your questionnaire**

## Appendix C

Copy of the Public Survey question set.

**Many New Zealanders will see a social worker to assist them with personal or family problems. What do you think is the minimum qualification needed, if any, for someone to qualify as a social worker?**

- a. No tertiary qualifications needed
- b. Certificate (tertiary level)
- c. Diploma
- d. Bachelor degree
- e. Masters degree
- f. Other
- g. Don't know

**In the event of a serious complaint about a social worker's behaviour or skills, to whom could you make a formal complaint?**

- a. A Government body or regulatory authority
- b. The Police
- c. The social worker's employer or workplace
- d. The social worker's professional association
- e. None of the above

**If a Social worker was found to be guilty of a serious issue about their behaviour or skills, which of the following do you believe to be true or false?**

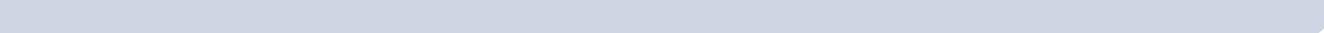
- a. They could be struck off the register of social workers or banned from practising social work
- b. They could be disciplined at work
- c. They could be asked to undergo further training and supervision

**To the best of your knowledge, is a social worker required to continue professional training to keep up to date?**

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

**People intending to work in some occupations in New Zealand are required by law to be registered with the appropriate regulatory body of their occupation and their names publically available on register. Which of the following professionals would you expect should be registered?**

- a. Social workers
- b. Therapists
- c. Counsellors
- d. Psychologists
- e. Psycho-therapists





**Social Workers  
Registration Board**  
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

**Offices:**  
Level 8  
111–115 Customhouse Quay  
Wellington

**Postal Address:**  
PO Box 10150  
The Terrace  
Wellington 6143

[www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz)