

Onboard

Newsletter of the Social Workers Registration Board

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR



Kia ora, ngā mihi maioha ki a koutou katoa!

It's that time of the year again when we hope that you've had a chance to spend time with loved ones and to recharge yourselves for another year.

It's been another busy year for the Social Workers Registration Board (the Board) with a number of updates that we'd like to highlight to you in this newsletter including:

1. Introducing some of the Board members and our 'frontline' staff who many of you have spoken to over the phone.
2. Over the past three months the Board has been actively promoting the importance of Registered Social Workers holding valid Annual Practising Certificates. This has resulted in a number of positive outcomes and highlighted a number of areas for further work.
3. The Board presented its draft review of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 to the Minister for Social Development in December.
4. We are continuing to work with the Ministry of Justice on a Memorandum of Understanding.
5. The Board has recently published our Annual Report for 2014/15 – a copy can be found on our website.
6. The Board's Code of Conduct has been published on our website for consultation. The consultation ends on 1 February so please have your say.
7. Shared learning from the Social Workers Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal.

On a final note, there have been a number of personnel changes over the past year and we'd like to acknowledge and thank all of the individuals who served on the Board, the Social Workers Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal and in our Wellington office. Thank you all and best wishes in your future endeavours.

We hope the newsletter is informative and we welcome any comments or questions that you may have.

Ngā manaakitanga
Shayne Walker (Chair, Social Workers Registration Board)

ON-THE-BOARD

(View individual Board profiles on our website)



Dianne Belz-Wepa



Sara Georgeson



Turitea Bolstad



Social Workers
Registration Board
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro

New Zealand Government

ON THE 'FRONTLINE'...



Amy Darwin



Whānau connections: Originally from Sutton Coldfield (North Birmingham), England, I have been in New Zealand since 2010.

Main role: I am now in a new role for 2016, Executive Assistant to the Chief Executive.

Frequently asked work questions

(and answers!): "My competence certificate and Annual Practising Certificate (APC) expires tomorrow, can I still practise?"

No, it is illegal for you to practise without a valid competence certificate or APC.

Aspirations: I'm looking forward to the new challenges ahead in 2016 with the new role I've just started. This is a new position in the Board and I hope to excel in this role.

Focus away from work: My 2 year old son. He has a special power of draining the energy out of us and running circles around the house, he certainly keeps us on our toes!

Hana Meinders



Whānau connections: My immediate family is from Wellington, and, minus a brief stint in Europe, I have lived here all my life. My heritage is an eclectic blend of Cook Island Maori, Irish and Dutch.

Main role: I am the main point of contact for most phone calls and email enquiries. I also help process registrations, competence certificates and APCs.

Frequently asked work questions (and answers!): "How long before my competence expires should I submit my assessment?" We recommend submission of applications at least 4–6 weeks prior to the expiry date to allow time for processing and in case we require further information. Please note that we cannot process any application without receiving full payment first so if your employer is paying please check when they intend to pay and allow that time frame to be considered too.

Aspirations: I would like to further advance my skills and understanding of the competence and registration processes.

Focus away from work: My partner and I are busy planning our wedding, which takes up most of my spare time! I also enjoy reading, writing, and watching movies.

Rachel Koha



Whānau connections: Ko Whakapiki te maunga, Ko Hokianga te awa, Ko Ngāpuhi te iwi, Ko Ihutai te hapu, Ko Pikipāria te marae. Born and raised in Wellington.

Main role: Managing the registration, competence and APC processes. I'm also in the process of developing an online application for registration.

Frequently asked work questions (and answers!): "I'm provisionally registered. How do I move to full registration?" You will need to complete 2000 hours of supervised social work practice in New Zealand post-qualification and hold a full competence certificate.

Aspirations: To be a qualified and registered social worker!

Focus away from work: Juggling raising two teenagers, working and studying full-time.

ANNUAL PRACTISING CERTIFICATE UPDATE

Thank you to everyone who renewed their APCs or declared themselves as 'Not practising' before the APC expiry date of 30 June 2015. There has been a significant decrease in the number of Registered Social Workers (RSWs) referred to a Complaints Assessment Committee for further investigation this year compared to the previous year.

The most significant issues regarding this year's APC non-renewals related to social workers failing to respond within the regulatory time frames because they did not:

- inform the Board that they had changed work or home address
- update their email details after their work email had become inactive
- declare themselves as 'Not practising' when moving overseas or finishing in a social work role
- believe their new job required an APC.

To provide some clarity around these issues:

1. All RSWs are required by law to inform the Board of any change of address. Although the APC renewal process provides social workers with an opportunity to update contact details on an annual basis, RSWs are able to change their contact details by accessing their online profile at any time.
2. The Board is currently updating its Practising Certificate Renewal Policy which will consider a requirement that all RSWs update their contact details with a non-work email address.
3. By law all RSWs are required to hold an APC unless the Board is informed that they are 'Not practising' or have had their registration cancelled or suspended. It is the responsibility of the social worker to tell the Board if there are any changes to your registration.
4. 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 roles that utilise an individual's social work expertise, experience, knowledge and skills. If you are unsure if you need an APC then please contact our office.

If you receive a reminder notice by email then please respond accordingly as you could save everyone a lot of time and money by clarifying your situation sooner rather than later. If you're unsure about the status of your registration then contact our office – our staff are always happy to help.

REVIEW OF THE SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION ACT 2003 UPDATE



The Board's draft review of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003 was presented to the Minister for Social Development in December. The review highlighted a number of issues for the Minister to consider including whether registration by social workers should be made mandatory or continue to be voluntary. The final report to the Minister is expected to be presented and tabled in Parliament sometime in the New Year.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH THE MINISTRY OF JUSTICE



To enhance and formalise the regulatory and information-sharing relationship between the Ministry of Justice and Board, we have begun discussions on a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU will help clarify each organisation's different roles and how we intend to work with each other so that we both meet our statutory responsibilities under the Social Workers Registration Act 2003. The Board expects the MoU to be completed in 2016 and will be published on our website once it has been finalised.

ANNUAL REPORT



In December the Board published its Annual Report for 2014–2015. The annual report is a public statement of the Board's financial position and assesses the performance of the Board over the last financial year. Highlights include establishing our agreed baseline targets, expanding the capacity of the Wellington office to deal with the increasing workload of the Board and maintaining our

fiscal viability for 2014–2015. To read the report go to our website at www.swrb.govt.nz.

Complaints Assessment Committee v RSW Y (Decision no. RSW2/D2/SWDT/2015)

The RSW entered into a sexual relationship with a vulnerable former client who had a troubled background. The RSW hid the relationship from their employer and also accessed personal information on the client on a work database after the professional relationship had ceased. The RSW's registration was cancelled, they were censured and ordered to pay costs of \$2500.

Complaints Assessment Committee v Surowiez-Lepper (Decision no. RSW3/D3/SWDT/2015)

Ms. Surowiez-Lepper, formed a friendship with a vulnerable elderly ex-client (Mrs. G) immediately after the professional relationship ended. Ms. Surowiez-Lepper exploited the relationship for personal gain, namely obtaining items of value and cash from Mrs. G. Ms. Surowiez-Lepper's registration was cancelled, she was censured and ordered to pay costs of \$2500.

Complaints Assessment Committee v Nelson (Decision no. RSW4/D1/SWDT/2015)

Ms. Nelson started a new role as a Service Coordinator for Independent Living. She did not obtain an APC. The Tribunal found that her failure to renew her practicing certificate amounted to conduct unbecoming of a social worker. She was censured, fined \$200 and ordered to pay costs of \$700.

Complaints Assessment Committee v Russell (Decision no. RSW6/D1/SWDT/2015)

Mr. Russell was employed as an Advocacy Coordinator with Auckland Action Against Poverty. He did not obtain an APC even though the job specification for the role required Mr. Russell to be registered. As part of his role Mr. Russell provides supervision to students. Mr. Russell was found to be employed as a social worker, was aware of the need to renew his APC but did not renew. This amounted to conduct unbecoming and as a result Mr. Russell was censured by the Tribunal.

Complaints Assessment Committee v Estall (Decision no. RSW8/D1/SWDT/2015)

Mr. Estall was employed as a community mental health clinician. He did not renew his APC. He did not contest his role was social work despite the job not carrying the title 'social worker'. The charge of conduct unbecoming was upheld and Mr. Estall was censured, fined \$200 and ordered to pay costs of \$1200.



CODE OF CONDUCT

The new draft Code of Conduct is available on our website for consultation. We would welcome any comments or feedback you may have. The consultation period finishes on 1 February 2016 and can be found at www.swrb.govt.nz.



TRIBUNAL CASES 2015

Last year the Social Workers Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal (the Tribunal) considered several cases which outlined the standards that all Registered Social Workers (RSWs) are expected to maintain. Here are the references to the full cases which can be found on our website plus a summary of the six cases:

Complaints Assessment Committee v Ham (Decision no. RSW1/D1/SWDT/2015)

Mr. Ham was convicted (in the criminal court) of two counts of arson and sentenced to 8 years one month in prison. The Tribunal found that the nature and extent of the offending breached the Board's Code of Conduct in that he failed to uphold high standards of personal conduct and act with integrity. Mr. Ham's registration was cancelled.

