

Speech: Robyn Corrigan – Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association Kāhui

E te Rangatira, nō Te Moana-nui-a-Kiwa, tēnā koe. Ngā rangitira o te motu, ki ngā tauwhiro, ngā kaimahi mo te manaaki tiakio te tangata, tēnā koutou katoa.

I stand her with two pōtae, first pōtae is representing the Tangata Whenua Social Workers Association, also known as “TWSWA”. And secondly, as identified, as the inaugural chair of the Social Workers Registration Board.

Now wearing that latter hat, it has been referred to by Shannon that the Act first came out in 2003. The event was very kindly hosted by the then Minister Maharey to celebrate the Act being passed. It happened on the 5th of November 2003, now some people here may have attended that function, but following the event a number of people went down to the waterfront and we were there in the darkness after this event and [Guy Fawkes] fireworks were all over the harbour and we thought it was very kind of Minister Maharey to organise those fireworks on our behalf.

Who would’ve imagined, like Shannon referred to, that it would’ve taken 17 years to get us where we are today. There have been many challenges to the Social Work profession along the way, and though it’s been indicated on our programme that we move and transition from tikanga to noa, the evolving space to a place of permanence, we would suggest that in relation to today’s kaupapa, mandatory registration is not the final destination.

I te ao Māori, many Social Workers and iwi and Māori social service organisation who have a relationship with TWSWA indicate over the years they have been reluctant to engage in the process of registration, not because they do or do not agree with the kaupapa, but that they have to engage in a process, a perceived “to iwi” lead process, that has minimised Māori world views. When protection of the public is explained, many agencies supporting whānau Māori who have been disadvantaged by so called “protection”, still have a high level of suspicion. The concept of safety for the public from a perceived agency control is difficult to align.

We were talking earlier before in the afternoon about the percentage of Māori and Pasifika registered SWs. It is still a very very low percentage compared to the number of Māori and Pasifika who are working in the sector, there has to be reason for the resistance to becoming engaged in the process. So, there’s still a great deal of work to be done, to overcome this suspicion to fully engage Tangata Whenua *willingly* into the registration process.

Social work is an amazing profession. World Social Work Day is an international recognition of the mahi that Social Workers do. TWSWA wants to acknowledge our relationship within IFSW, that Aotearoa has the first indigenous association to be acknowledged at an international level is groundbreaking. That an indigenous commission has been established within the federation is the result of a parallel journey to that of mandatory registration, from October 2004, it has been a 16-year journey (initiated by TWSWA) promoting the recognition of indigenous social work practise, indigenous services, and indigenous social workers.

Nō reira, tēnei te mihi kia koutou, te mihi tautoko, te mihi aroha, kia koutou katoa

Happy World Social Work Day!