

Editorial

Bridging Knowledge Systems: Social Work Practice in Diverse Contexts

Helen Hickson

This issue brings together ten compelling papers that explore the multifaceted nature of social work education and practice. As I review the contributions to this issue, I recognise my privilege and position as a cis-gendered, white, English-speaking, educated woman in Australia. This perspective inevitably shapes how I engage with these works and the broader social work discourse.

Indigenous knowledge takes centre stage in our Editor's Choice article by Donna Pickett et al. "Yarning and yonga stew: Indigenous knowledge in tutoring research methods" demonstrates how Indigenous mentoring and yarning practices can enrich our teaching approaches. Pickett's work invites us to consider:

- How might we better integrate Indigenous knowledge systems into university education settings?
- What can Indigenous pedagogies teach us about creating more inclusive learning environments?

The research articles in this issue explore innovative practices across diverse contexts. Jacqui Cameron's work on interactive animations highlights technological solutions for improving supervision relationships. Have you considered how digital tools might enhance your own supervisory practice?

Fiona Gardner et al examine the Family Wellbeing Program, offering evidence-based insights into supporting student wellbeing while developing essential skills. Her research underscores the dual responsibility educators face: nurturing wellbeing whilst building professional skills and competencies.

I am saddened by international news and the threats to those issues that our mothers and grandmothers fought for. This context makes Jayde Mitrevski's work, "Beyond Sex Work Stigma", particularly relevant. Her matricentric feminist approach challenges us to examine our own biases. How do our personal attitudes affect our ability to provide non-judgmental care to marginalised groups?

Charlotte Chisnell et al's intriguingly titled "Hidden in Plain Sight" paper reveals overlooked aspects of social work practice for child protection workers. Their research reminds us that sometimes the most important elements of our work are those we fail to notice such as the systemic barriers, non-specific legislation and gaps in multi-agency collaboration.

Beth Crisp's timely research on kinship and foster care during COVID-19 captures the voices of carers during unprecedented circumstances. Her work documents the existing concerns of carers' including stressful relationships with birth parents and social workers, the potentially fragile nature of arrangements involving elderly carers and a lack of formal policy and practice to ensure children in care do not experience digital poverty. These problems remain and out of home care organisations need to have procedures and systems in place to address these concerns for vulnerable children.

Katheryn Pascoe and Kate Hay examine the experiences of mid-level social service managers during disasters, such as the significant earthquake events in Aotearoa New Zealand. In this paper they highlight themes of building alliances and rapid adaption to respond to changing circumstances all while remaining sensitive to the needs of individuals accessing services, communities, and colleagues.

The teaching note by David Hodgson and his colleagues presents a model for a Social Justice Hub, providing a framework for integrating social justice principles into social work field education. This practical contribution reminds us that this work is far from over and social work educators, practitioners and students have an important role to think about the future.

There are two reflective narratives, by Horsell et al and Fitzallen, which outline the challenges that social work educators and social work students face in field education, particularly in the context of neo-liberal rationalities and changes in the student demographics. Fitzallen's reflection describes her perspective as a social work student completing her first placement and outlines the aspects of this placement that helped develop her critical thinking and communication skills.

Several unifying themes emerge across these diverse papers:

- The value of cultural responsiveness in social work education and practice
- The importance of relationship-building in effective social work
- The need for innovative approaches to address complex social challenges
- The critical role of reflective practice in professional development

What connects these papers is their commitment to expanding our understanding of effective social work practice. Each contribution challenges us to think more deeply about how we teach, learn and apply social work principles in service of a future about true gender equity.

These papers arrive at a time when social work faces mounting pressures. Economic constraints, growing social inequalities and complex service needs demand creative responses from practitioners and educators alike. The authors in this issue offer fresh perspectives on addressing these challenges, working towards a world where women and girls and people across all intersections of identity, have access to safety, education, economic justice, and leadership. Their research offers valuable insights for organisational leadership during turbulent times when many are fighting for safety, equity and inclusion. We are reminded that there is more work to do, particularly to wedge the hard-earned steps towards recognition, equity and equality for LGBTQIA+ communities that are now under threat in many contexts.

For practitioners, these papers provide evidence-based approaches that might inform your direct work. For educators, they offer innovative pedagogical strategies to enhance your teaching. For researchers, they highlight promising areas for further investigation.

How might these insights transform your own practice? What elements resonate with your experience? Which approaches challenge your current thinking?

We invite you to engage deeply with these contributions, to question your assumptions and to consider how these diverse perspectives might enrich your own work. The strength of our profession lies in this ongoing dialogue between research, practice and lived experience.

Thank you to all contributors for sharing their valuable insights. Your work enriches our collective understanding and strengthens the foundation of our profession as we continue the essential work of creating a more just and equitable society.

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