

## BOOK REVIEW

### **Our Voices Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Work**

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Bindi Bennett, Sue Green, Stephanie Gilbert, and Dawn Bessarab (Eds)  
South Yarra, Australia: Palgrave Macmillan 2013  
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Until relatively recently, Australia's colonialist history and past injustices have seemed less prominent in social work education than in similar colonized countries such as New Zealand and Canada. Equally, culturally safe ways of working from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives have not been central in past Australian social work curricula. Most recently, new Australian Social Work Education and Accreditation Standards (AASW, 2012) now outline the content all accredited Australian social work courses must incorporate. This content includes the legacies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of colonisation and historical trauma, recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of working, strengths and worldviews, and facilitation of critical reflection skills for enduring insight into how personal beliefs influence professional interactions and outcomes.

What has been missing, largely for Australian social work educators and students, is a core text that clearly and comprehensively covered such content, including ways of working with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as unique, separate groups. This book, *Our Voices*, significantly contributes to closing this gap in available resources. This book begins by covering the importance of history, working from pre-contact through to legacies in current policies, while also highlighting unhelpful intervention from non-Indigenous social workers in a more contemporary context (Bindi Bennett, Chapter 1). In Chapter 2, Indigenous leaders in social work are profiled (Stephanie Gilbert), followed in Chapter 3 with principles and strategies for engaging community including the need for clinical and cultural competences (Karen Menzies and Stephanie Gilbert). In Chapter 4, by Dawn Bessarab, the topic of culturally appropriate, culturally relevant, and culturally safe supervision helps extend educators', students' and practitioners' conceptualisations of supervision. In the next chapter (5), Dawn Bessarab and Frances Crawford highlight the importance of understanding and recognising the existence of intergenerational trauma for many Indigenous Australians, while reminding students, educators and practitioners to recognise strengths and hope. In Chapter 6, Noritta Morsue-Diop offers an insider perspective on respectful engagement with Torres Strait Islanders, and in Chapter 7, Violet Bacon identifies narrative work as central to building relationships. In Chapter 8,

by Sue Green and Eileen Baldry, the necessity of core knowledge, skills and ways of working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social work courses is emphasised, and in Chapter 9 by Joanna Zubrzycki and Frances Crawford, the focus is on collaborative practice. For Indigenous students in particular, Chapter 10 (Sue Green, Bindi Bennett, Aaron Collins, Brooke Gowans, Kiel Hennessey and Kylie Smith) provides insight into social work students' insider experiences. Finally, Chapter 11, by Maggie Walter, Sandra Taylor and Daphne Habibis, provokes readers to reverse the lens to critically interrogate invisible whiteness. While the authors of this chapter identify that candid discussions about race are still "largely missing from national conversations" (p. 244) and there "is much work to be done" (p. 245), we thought a concluding "Where to from here" chapter might have summarised the contents of the collection before rousing educators and students towards greater action to support these missing, candid conversations. Nevertheless, we think this collection is extremely useful. In a second-year subject we co-teach, this book has been the set text since its publication in 2013. Prior to its publication, no relevant text was available. The chapters provide students with weekly required readings, and the included scenarios and questions help provoke extended learning and classroom discussion. We have found this book invaluable for grounding students' learning and we highly recommend it.

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## Reference

Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). (2012). *Australian social work education and accreditation standards*. Canberra, ACT: Author.