

Editorial

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In the nearly fifty years since the Australian Community Work Association (ACWA) published its first journal articles the profession has changed beyond recognition. In the early years of the Association, welfare workers as they were then known, were largely unqualified and mostly worked through charities or the government departments responsible for welfare support. Formal training and qualifications were in short supply and by no means compulsory in the not-for-profit sector.

In 2020, community work practitioners are professionals in their own right; qualified, highly skilled; an integral part of the human services workforce - but none of this has come easily. Over five decades community work has evolved, generally unnoticed and unacknowledged, into a profession. The view of community work being ancillary to other professional work has dominated, without justification, the employment practices of many state government departments, not-for-profits and local government for years.

This blinkered approach highlights the ongoing challenge for the profession and for ACWA. Many qualified graduates are in jobs below their skill level and this is particularly apparent where diploma holders work in certificate level jobs. The SkillsIQ publication *Right Skills. Right Time?* reveals that 1 in 4 Australians are over-qualified for their current jobs, and across Australia over qualification costs individuals 3.6 billion dollars annually in foregone income due to time spent in unnecessary study and \$555 million in superfluous tuition fees. Whilst this is an issue across the board it does have a profound effect on our sector. Apart from the low job satisfaction levels of graduates, they are also left in the position of never gaining skills at the right level thus stymying their own career development.

In rejuvenating and restarting this Journal we hope to encourage enquiry and rigorous research into the profession leading to scholarly articles, opinion pieces, and practitioner reports. Some of the thornier issues will be examined and start to influence opinion. Over time we anticipate that there will be both an upsurge in public recognition of community work as a profession and in the professional pride of community work practitioners. Taken together these two trends should cement the place of qualified community workers as professionals in the human services workforce.

Our new journal, the *Australian Journal of Community Work*, has a distinguished Editorial Advisory Board and a respected and experienced Editor. We are grateful for their combined expertise and enthusiasm which will

help the Journal carve out a place for itself alongside other well-regarded publications. Above all, however, we hope that practitioners will gain from differing insights into the profession and feel inspired to share some of their own valuable experiences and knowledge for the benefit of others.

We invite practitioners, academics and researchers alike to contribute to the Journal believing, as we do, that this will provide a rounded and influential publication that will stand the profession in good stead for years to come.

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