



The Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill – Supplementary Order Paper

The Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill was introduced to Parliament 9 August 2017 and passed First Reading 17 August 2017.

There were a number of issues with the Bill, the most significant being that practicing as a social worker or being willing to practice as a social worker was defined as being “employed or engaged by another person in a position that is described using the words social worker”.

The ANZASW database has 110 role titles occupied by qualified and registered social workers that are not described using the words social worker. Almost half of the members are working in these roles. Under the Bill as written, these people would not be deemed to be social workers and would therefore not have to be registered. It is appropriate to note that people practicing social work who are not registered fall outside the remit of SWRB. This means that these practitioners are not externally regulated, and nor can they be held to account for their practice.

Effectively the Bill handed the employers the responsibility for determining who was, and who was not a social worker. After First Reading members were frequently calling ANZASW to say that their position had been restructured, the work remained the same, the people using the service remained the same, but the role was no longer called ‘social worker’ and payment of registration / Annual Practicing Certificates, professional development and supervision was removed from individual employment agreements.

ANZASW made a detailed submission to the Social Services and Community Select Committee following extensive consultation with members. You can read the submission [here](#).

Following the Social Services and Community Select Committee hearings the Bill included another worrying amendment – that a person was not practicing as a social worker if social work was one of the suite of qualifications required for the role and that person did not hold themselves out to be a social worker.

It should be noted that over 70% of the submissions to the Social Services and Community Select Committee were from the social work profession; those submissions “expressed a desire for the inclusion of scopes of practice as a means for setting the parameters of social work, and potentially helping to better define social work. Many of those submissions also promoted the use of text from the HPCA Act as a model for the operation of any proposed scopes”¹.

ANZASW along with Social Work Alliance developed an effective relationship with officials in MSD to develop a SOP to create a Bill that was fit for purpose. The Social Work Alliance represents a wide

¹ Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill: Departmental Report 4th April 2018.

group including the regulator, the professional bodies, educators, employers, the union, health social workers and large employers of social workers.

In the context of both the overwhelming support for a scope of practice approach to registration in Select Committee submissions and the feedback received by the Alliance members from their constituents, the Alliance advocated for and successfully worked alongside with MSD to develop a scope of practice approach to registration.

The Social Workers Registration Board produced a Social Work – General Scope of Practice in July 2017. (see <http://swrb.govt.nz/download/when-an-annual-practising-certificate-is-required/>). It is expected that this scope will be part of the discussions with the profession about a future scope during the two-year transition to mandatory registration. The Bill clearly requires SWRB to consult with social workers, employers of social workers and others affected by the proposed scope including the professional associations and educators.

For practitioners the scope of practice provides a mechanism to limit the ability of employers to hire people with social work qualifications but describe the role as something else in order to avoid costs associated with registration and as a means of avoiding a professional wage.

ANZASW welcomes the Supplementary Order Paper and the positive changes if adopted that it will make for the profession.

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