



## **The Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill passes Second Reading**

The Social Work Alliance is delighted that the Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill passed Second Reading in Parliament last night.

It was very affirming to watch Minister Sepuloni speaking last night. The Minister and her colleagues have inspired real sense of achievement for the future of the social work profession. The Alliance appreciated the universal acknowledgment of the great and challenging work that social workers do in our communities.

The Committee of the Whole of House will debate the Supplementary Order Paper (SOP) tonight. The SOP proposes significant changes to the Bill and most importantly introduces a form of registration based on scopes of practice.

The Social Work Alliance made up of representatives from, professional associations, the statutory regulator, employers, educators and the union, were united in their opposition to the requirement that only social workers in positions described using the words “social worker” would be required to register. The Alliance estimated that approximately half of the social work workforce would not be required to register if this position was maintained. The Alliance was clear that social work should be defined by what social workers do, rather than what they are called by their employers.

This clearly would not achieve the aim of the Bill which was to “increase the professionalism of the social work profession and ensure the public is protected from harm”. Social workers who are not registered would not be able to be held to account for their practice by the Social Workers Registration Board.

The Alliance developed a positive relationship with officials from both the Ministers Office and Ministry of Social Development to negotiate changes to the Bill. The outcome of these negotiations is the SOP that is being debated today. The Alliance fully endorses the SOP which includes protection of the title of social worker and registration to practice within a scope of practice.

The scope of practice approach to mandatory registration of social workers makes it clear for all stakeholders, practitioners, employers, people using services and the general public, about who is and is not entitled to practice as a social worker. This means that New Zealanders can be assured

that practicing social workers, regardless of their title will be qualified, competent and accountable for their practice.

The Alliance looks forward to the SOP being incorporated into the Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill and passing into law. The profession of social work will finally have the recognition and status it fully deserves.

The journey for social work registration commenced in 1964 when the New Zealand Association of Social Workers was established. The first milestone to achieving this was voluntary registration of Social Workers provided by the Social Workers Registration Act 2003. With over 7,000 social workers already registered it is clear that the profession recognises the value and benefits of registration in a voluntary regime. The Alliance now looks forward to the final stage, the SOP being adopted and the Social Workers Registration Legislation Bill passing Third Reading. This will be a momentous occasion for the profession and those who use social work services.

ENDS

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