

# Onboard

Newsletter of the Social Workers Registration Board

## REGISTRATION PROFILE

“Prior to registration it was as though social workers’ didn’t have any standing or credibility with other professionals, such as lawyers or psychologists. Now, being a member of a professional body, there’s a sense of increased credibility in social work knowledge,” says newly registered Social Worker Patricia Chivers.



**PATRICIA IS A SUPERVISOR** with Child, Youth, and Family in New Plymouth and has worked for the Department in its various forms for seven years – her whole social work career. As a mature student and while raising her children, Patricia felt

she “wanted a career that would make a difference.” She showed true perseverance by completing her degree over seven years, five years extramurally.

Child, Youth and Family are the largest employer of social workers, and have a commitment to and are working toward full registration. Patricia believes this is a good thing and felt that registration was “a really good process.”

“Although it was quite involved, the competency process has been great, giving us the opportunity to really reflect on our practice and affirming our identity as social worker practitioners,” says Patricia.



**MILAN SUMICH HAS ALSO** worked for the Department for his whole career, of 43 years. Milan was actually most of the way through his BA degree in the 1960’s when working as a social science trainee, part of which was at Child Welfare in Christchurch.

He intended on becoming a clinical psychologist, but really enjoyed the placement with Child Welfare, and applied for and was appointed as a ‘Boys Welfare Officer’. In the 1970’s the job title changed to Social Worker, and throughout the years Milan’s job has changed too. He is now a Specialist Supervisor, representing CYF at Youth Courts North Shore and Waitakere.

“The time has past very quickly, it’s just flashed by. Time passes quickly in social work. Finding solutions for families and children – time just goes. I have a great respect for my colleagues at CYF. They have always treated children as children, not inmates or anything else,” says Milan.

Milan considers it a privilege to become involved with clients and their families and has always felt that social workers didn’t get the recognition they deserve.

“Registration will give people a more secure identity.” **Milan Sumich**

“I think registration will help towards this. It was very affirming, particularly the competency panel where you have to go through everything you’ve done. Social workers didn’t have an identity and there wasn’t a sense of security. Registration will give people a more secure identity,” says Milan.

Patricia and Milan represent two of over 1300 applications received from Child, Youth and Family. Patricia has full registration based on her recognised social work qualification and experience. Milan, who is also fully registered, gained registration under section 13 of the Social Workers Registration Act. This acknowledges that, although he did not hold a recognised social work qualification, his extensive social work experience, BA degree, knowledge and professional development, compensates for the lack of a formal social work qualification.

“Child, Youth and Family’s commitment to support the registration of their social work staff is a huge undertaking and the SWRB commends the leadership role the Department has taken in recognising the value of registration,” says Sean McKinley, CE of SWRB.

**For more information about registration visit [www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz)**

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As more social workers in New Zealand attain statutory registration the SWRB has noted a decrease in the number asking questions about how they register and an increase in questions regarding what their statutory obligations are. *More inside...*

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**Social Workers  
Registration Board**  
Kāhui Whakamana Tauwhiro



## Welcome to the Autumn edition of *Onboard* the newsletter of the Social Workers Registration Board.

The SWRB has now registered over 850 social workers in New Zealand and expects this number to increase over the next few months as more applicants complete their competence assessments as the final stage in completing their applications. By July 2006 we are on target to have registered our 1000th social worker and expect to have 1500 registered social workers by year end.

Congratulations to all those who have created social work history in New Zealand by becoming registered and also an acknowledgement to those who are in the process of finalising applications as we appreciate the effort that this entails.

Regards

Sean McKinley  
Chief Executive and Registrar  
Social Workers Registration Board

### IF YOU ARE CONSIDERING APPLYING FOR REGISTRATION...

Visit our website [www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz) for detailed information on the registration process or contact our office via email [office@swrb.org.nz](mailto:office@swrb.org.nz) or telephone (04) 931 2650 to request a registration pack. Be sure to advise the SWRB staff of whether or not you hold a qualification and if you do whether you obtained this in New Zealand or overseas.

### IF YOU HAVE APPLIED BUT HAVE YET TO BE REGISTERED...

Contact our office by post P O Box 10-150 Wellington or email [info@swrb.org.nz](mailto:info@swrb.org.nz) or telephone (04) 931 2650 if you have any questions or are unsure of where your application is at in the process. Either myself or one of the other staff will be able to help you to ensure that you meet the requirements for registration.

## REGISTRATION UPDATE

AS MORE SOCIAL WORKERS in New Zealand attain statutory registration the SWRB has noted a decrease in the number asking questions about how they register and an increase in questions regarding what their statutory obligations are now that they are registered. In response to these questions the SWRB is currently drafting another brochure in our series of 'Frequently Asked Questions'. It will focus on what is required of social workers to maintain their registered status. As we approach the renewal of Annual Practising Certificates (APC) for those already registered and the issue of the first APC notice for newly registered social workers, we thought it appropriate to focus on Certificates of Registration and APCs as part of this edition of *Onboard*.

### WHAT IS A CERTIFICATE OF REGISTRATION?

The SWR Act 2003 states that promptly after the Board has decided that a person should be registered based on a successful application; the Registrar must register him or her, and give him or her written notice stating that he or she has been registered. This written notice comes in the form of a Certificate of Registration that is signed and dated by the Registrar and states all the information about the social worker that is required for a certificate of registration such as if a person is fully, provisionally or temporarily registered and why.

### WHAT IS AN ANNUAL PRACTISING CERTIFICATE (APC)?

Section 25 of the SWR Act 2003 clearly states that no registered social worker may be employed or engaged as a social worker unless he or she holds a current practising certificate. An APC is similar to a "Warrant of Fitness" for registered social workers which they have to obtain every year if they intend to practise as a social worker. An APC identifies that the registered social worker is safe to practise as they have been assessed as competent to practise, are considered competent to work with Maori and competent to work with different ethnic and cultural groups, deemed to be a fit and proper person to undertake social work, have (or are working towards completing) a social work qualification and have completed (or are working towards completing) enough practical experience hours. Just as a licensed driver you cannot drive a car without a valid WoF you cannot, as a registered social worker, practice social work without a valid APC.

### HOW DO I MAINTAIN MY FITNESS TO PRACTICE SO THAT I CAN OBTAIN AN APC?

The SWRB has developed Annual Practising Certificate Criteria that can be accessed via the SWRB website [www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz) or can be requested in hard copy from the office.

### HOW WILL THE SWRB KNOW THAT I HAVE MAINTAINED MY FITNESS TO HOLD AN APC?

The Board maintains a database of information regarding registered social workers competence assessments, qualifications and practical experience hours and will advise registered social workers when any information is required to be updated or, for example, when competence certificates are due to expire. The SWRB will also randomly audit a number of registered social workers and ask them to provide documentation, including the CPD log, to prove that they are maintaining their fitness to practice.

Further information on registration is currently available on the SWRB website [www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz) and will be regularly updated so make sure you check out the News and Issues section for updates.

### INDEMNITY INSURANCE: DO YOU HAVE IT?

With professional registration comes professional responsibility. The SWRB provides a Code of Conduct and Guidelines to the Code of Conduct that can be accessed via the SWRB website [www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz) or can be requested in hard copy from the office. Complaints made against registered social workers are managed by the SWRB Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal and in the event of a complaint being made registered social workers should be aware of the need for Indemnity Insurance. Indemnity Insurance can be obtained via insurance brokers or else the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) provides an indemnity scheme for members.

The benefits to social workers having their own insurance protection, even for employees whose employer has an indemnity policy, have been identified by the professional body (ANZASW) and include:

- 1) Greater certainty of protection.**  
Comment: the employer may or may not have complied with the conditions of their own policy – it may in fact not be renewed.
- 2) The ability to mount one's own defence independent from the employer.**  
Comment: often enough in the event of a claim the interests of the employer and employee may be somewhat disparate.
- 3) Availability of one's own limit of indemnity.**  
Comment: the employer's insurance may be exhausted in defending itself.
- 4) Additional unique benefits – such as the cover for ethics hearings, daily allowance for court appearance, a free legal service.**  
Comment: these would not normally be included in an employer's policy.

# FROM THE BOARD:

## THE SOCIAL WORKERS REGISTRATION BOARD

has achieved a number of critical milestones since being appointed in November 2003. These include applications being able to be received from 1 October 2004, the appointment of members of the Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal in April 2005, the launch of the Code of Conduct in May 2005 and the introduction of a social work degree as minimum entry level qualification for registration from 1 January 2006.

The next twelve months will see the SWRB reach another two critical dates.

From 1 July 2006 the SWRB will no longer receive crown funding and is therefore required to fund future expenditure from the fees set for registration applications and annual practicing certificates. While the SWRB will be required to be self funding the Board will still maintain an output agreement with the Minister for Social Development and Employment as well as maintaining its links with the Ministry for Social Development.

Before 10 April 2007 the SWRB is required by the Social Workers Registration (SWR) Act 2003 to review the operation of the Act, its own operations and consider the extent to which this Act, and the system of voluntary registration it provides for, are achieving the purposes of the Act and whether any amendments to the Act are necessary. The Board intends to appoint a Steering Committee, with representation from the profession, employers, the professional body and other major stakeholders to ensure all views are incorporated in this process. The outcome of the report is to be presented to the Minister and we will update you with progress in future editions of *Onboard*.

The SWRB is preparing a 2006 Statement of Intent and this document will outline the Board's direction for the next three years including, how it will manage the Act review process along with its other duties as a self funding agency of the crown.

As noted in the first edition of *Onboard*, the SWRB met in January 2006 to review its committee structure and membership and further define the strategic direction of the SWRB. The Board has identified five key areas of strategic focus and is currently finalising the committee structure for the 2006/07 year.

As the SWRB moves out of the implementation phase of the SWR Act and begins to develop a strong base of registered social workers the Board recognises that the operational arm of the SWRB will need to expand to ensure that the purposes of the SWR Act are met. The Board intends to retain a committee structure similar to that of the previous year but will endeavour to have the Board focus on governance and policy issues



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while ensuring that the SWRB secretariat has the resources to meet the operational requirements of the legislation.

The committee structure of the SWRB will maintain a governance role by retaining the Registration, Education and Practise Standards and Finance, Audit and Reporting committees as set out in the first edition of *Onboard*. The Board is to review the Promotion and Consultation committee to determine the extent to which the work of this committee will be taken over by the secretariat with regular reporting on progress directed back to the Board.

The SWRB has also introduced a new committee, the Maori, Pacific, and different Cultural and Ethnic Groups (MPCEG) Standing Committee with the responsibility to meet the Board's obligations under Section 100 *Obligations of the Board in Relation to Maori*, and Section 101 *Obtaining the views of ethnic and other cultural groups* as set out in the SWR Act 2003.

The following **five key areas** of focus provide the Board with the opportunity to build on progress it has made since 2004 and should provide a sound basis for defining its strategic direction over the coming years:

1. Increasing Registration to 4,000 - 4,500 by 2009.
2. Achieving public trust in Social Work Practice and Accountability.
3. Development of a Stakeholder Management Plan – “Working together to promote professionalism”.
4. Review of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003.
5. Building the capability and sustainability of the Board, Secretariat and the Tribunal.

The Social Workers Registration Board will soon present the 2006 Statement of Intent to the Minister to be tabled in Parliament. The Statement of Intent will be available in hard copy from the SWRB secretariat and also available in PDF format on the SWRB website [www.swrb.org.nz](http://www.swrb.org.nz)

I look forward to updating you on the Board's progress in future editions of *Onboard*.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robyn Corrigan".

Robyn Corrigan  
Chairperson, SWRB

## EVENTS AND CONFERENCES

IFSW WORLD CONFERENCE: A WORLD OUT OF BALANCE – WORKING FOR A NEW SOCIAL EQUILIBRIUM

30 July - 3 August 2006, Munich, Germany

The Global Conference for social workers will also celebrate the 50 year jubilee of the International Federation of Social Workers

For more information, visit <http://www.socialwork2006.de>

THE 8TH AUSTRALIAN INJURY PREVENTION CONFERENCE

27-29 September, 2006

University of New South Wales, Sydney

The conference theme of "Working Together" emphasises the increasing need for researchers and injury prevention practitioners to embrace a broad multi-disciplinary approach. Its success will be measured by the depth and variety of lively debate over injury issues.

Registration open: 1 May

For more information, visit <http://www.aipn.com.au>

2006 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FAMILY GROUP CONFERENCE

26-29 November 2006, Wellington

The Department of Child, Youth and Family is holding an international conference on family group conferences. The conference, "Coming Home – Te Hokinga Mai", will explore developments in the family group conference model.

Further information, including registration documents, will be provided as it becomes available on the Child, Youth and Family website [www.cyf.govt.nz](http://www.cyf.govt.nz)

## COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNAL

**"THE MAIN GOAL of the Tribunal is to safeguard members of the public, through the complaints process, by holding registered social workers accountable for the way they practice," says Vaughan Milner, Chair of the Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal.**

The functions of the Tribunal are to administer the complaints process, exercise disciplinary powers, and carry out any other functions conferred or imposed by the Social Workers Registration Act or other Acts.

"It's vital to all involved we have good networks with the Health and Disability Commission and good relationships with stakeholders like the Children and Families Commissions. At a government level, they bring people into the social arena," says Vaughan.

"An important step in any complaint is the Complaints Assessment Committee. It determines how a complaint should be dealt with, and whether or not it should even proceed to a Tribunal hearing," he says.

Complaints Assessment Committees have powers to undertake investigations and are also able to consider any other investigations that have been carried out.

The current Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal is made up of nine members and is still awaiting a Ministerial appointee. The existing members are made up of four barristers or solicitors, four with a social or community work background, and a Presbyterian Minister. There is a mixture of ethnicity and gender with "experience in management and respecting people with diversity and their services," said Vaughan, who is himself a registered social worker.

To date, the Tribunal has met twice, for training requirements, including introductions to legislation and looking at how other disciplinary tribunals function. It plans to meet once again for a mock proceeding to see how best to interact as a group and manage any proceedings they may be involved in.

"It would be great if we never had to see each other after that," says Vaughan, "the only reason would be if there was a complaint – we're all here to avoid that."



Vaughan Milner

**"An important step in any complaint is the Complaints Assessment Committee. It determines how a complaint should be dealt with, and whether or not it should even proceed to a Tribunal hearing."**