

May 28, 2011

**To the Health Ministers of Australia**

We are writing in support of the Australian Association of Social Workers submission for Social Work to be included in a third stage of professions into the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (NRAS).

The Australian Council of Heads of Schools of Social Work (ACHSSW) is a body representing the Heads of all Social Work Schools across the country and their staff. As such we bring to the table the combined expertise of Social Work academics across the nation. Our body strongly supports the submission of the AASW. We are deeply committed to this agenda for many reasons, including our chief concern that people accessing the services of social workers are protected from harm and assured of a quality service from qualified, trained professionals. We are also deeply committed to social workers receiving the recognition and security that registration provides.

Social workers practice in a range of health services across the private, public and community health settings. It is increasingly being recognised that social workers bring to health care the knowledge and skills to assist people and their families needing health services.

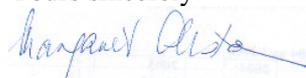
Social work has a long history of self-regulation which we achieve through an ethics complaints management system; social work accreditation standards within our schools of social work across the country; a national continuing professional accreditation system; a new Australian College of Social Work recognising the highest standards of practice; and accreditation to provide mental health services through Federal government programs such as the Better Access to Mental Health services.

The Australian Council can testify to the rigorous standards enforced through these measures. All of our programs are assessed for professional integrity on a five year cycle by a panel of external reviewers. We are committed through the university sector to the highest standards of professional excellence.

We are deeply concerned that without registration, there is limited protection for people accessing services. There is no certainty that those delivering the health services they require are trained professional social workers. There is a grave danger that untrained people are using the term 'social worker' in their work.

We urge that the Health Ministers respond to our deeply held convictions that social work must be included in the NRAS scheme. We wholeheartedly support the AASW submission and note with some pride that our organisations work very effectively together for the betterment of our profession. Social Workers have waited a very long time for this recognition. We urge that you respond favourably to our submission.

Yours sincerely



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