

The development of the draft Scope of Practice

**Ka hua te whakaaro
Ka hua te korero**

Thought blooms
Spoken word blossoms

Statement

“Social workers are professionals who can make an extraordinary difference in the life of vulnerable children, young people, adults and families/whānau. It is a profession that requires specific skills and knowledge to enable the practitioner to successfully work alongside people coping with stressful events. Good social work practice can help clients improve the quality of their life, and support the development of individuals, groups, communities, and society as a whole. Poor social work practice can have a negative effect.” *Mandatory Social Worker Registration. Report from the SWRB Discussion Paper 2011*

Background

After years of debate regarding social work regulation, voluntary registration of social workers was introduced with the passing of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003. The primary purpose of the Act is to protect the safety of members of the public by ensuring social workers are competent to practise.

As part of a five-yearly review of the Act, the Social Workers Registration Board (the SWRB) released a discussion paper in 2011 on Mandatory Social Worker Registration and the feedback from this process was a resounding “Yes”. 95% of the 422 submissions received supported a move to mandatory social work registration.

The Board recommended to government that registration becomes mandatory with the title social worker reserved for registered practitioners only.

The process to achieve this included:

- a Members Bill introduced into Parliament by Carmel Sepuloni on 23 July 2015, this did not progress to the first reading;
- December 2016, the next Inquiry into the operation of the Social Workers Registration Act 2003, re-introduced the recommendations that the title of social worker be protected, and that social work registration be mandatory;
- August 2017 Hon. Anne Tolley introduced a Bill into the House that challenged the original recommendations, by defining a practising social worker in ways that were

deemed unpalatable and unworkable by the sector. The many submissions to Select Committee evidenced the opposition;

- After many changes and submissions by the sector, on 28 February 2019, the amendments to the Social Workers Registration Act were passed including the original recommendations and the development of a scope or scopes of practice by 27 February 2021 to ‘...describe the social work services that are performed by the social work profession’.

Fundamental to the intent of protection of the title of social worker in the amended legislation is that a social worker is identified as such by their eligibility for registration as a social worker, rather than the title of their job.

From the 27th of February 2021, only registered social workers will be able to call themselves a social worker in Aotearoa New Zealand. If you are practising social work, you will need to hold a current practising certificate.

Developing the draft scope of practice

In keeping with the amendments to the Act, the SWRB is developing a ‘general’ scope of practice. This is a high-level description of social work practice. Social workers working within a field of practice or a practice setting, will often be working within an organisational practice framework.

Thanks to all social workers who provided input into the webinars and hui that were held to begin the process of developing a scope of practice, which identified the following:

- Constitutional context: the place of Te Tiriti o Waitangi;
- Principles of social justice, human rights, empowerment and respect for diversity;
- Representation of social workers and their practice: difficult to achieve in a high-level statement given variation in contexts and roles;
- The authenticity of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand including Te Reo, and Māori concepts.

He Awa Whiria: The Braided Rivers Model: Angus MacFarlane:

The Working Group looked to He Awa Whiria. This model is dynamic and facilitates different cultural knowledge systems to function separately or together as appropriate, co-existing just as the streams of a braided river flow apart or together in their journey to the sea. We also looked to the Negotiated Spaces Model developed by researchers in the Te Hau Mihi Ata project. The Negotiated Spaces model builds on He Awa Whiria, and describes the Mātauranga Māori and science knowledge domains, and honours the space in the middle where there is a transfer of knowledge and experience from one domain to the other.

It is recognized that each social worker brings their own multiple lenses to their work – that of their cultural identity, their professional identity and their work context/field of practice. It is in the space where social workers share social work knowledge and experiences from one

to another. In Aotearoa New Zealand this has resulted in innovations in practice and the development of indigenous practice wisdom and narratives.

Working Group:

The SWRB established a Working Group made up of representatives of organisations and sector leaders, who are diverse in the lens they apply and the fields of practice and have shown commitment and contributed to the strengthening of the social work profession. Their collective wisdom and experience, as well as an understanding of the regulatory context, are regarded as essential to developing a Scope of Practice that is unique to Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Working Group is made up of two caucuses representing two rivers of cultural knowledge systems, the Tangata Whenua knowledge holders and those representing Tauwiwi or Tangata Whai Muri knowledge systems. The two caucuses met separately and intersected at points, coming together to develop the words to describe the scope of social work and the common values across the profession.

The scope of practice includes a section which describes the shared social work principles, values, and purpose of social work. It links to the qualifications and professional standards and codes important to social work professionals in Aotearoa New Zealand. This section of the scope is deliberately high level in recognition of the varied roles and practice contexts social workers work within. It acknowledges that each context will have a practice framework or model of practice that guides their work.

Tangata Whenua Kaupapa:

The koha gifted to this space is the Niho Taniwha Framework. This framework is an important part of the history and development of social work in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Niho Taniwha as a Framework was conceived by John Bradley of Rangitāne, Ngāti Kuia, Ngāti Toa, and is regarded as his legacy to the profession.

Pa Turoa Haronga, who was a life member of ANZASW, worked with other Tangata Whenua social workers within ANZASW to collaboratively develop the Niho Taniwha Competency Process for ANZASW. This process was specifically for the Tangata Whenua Takawaenga Caucus members and tangata whenua practitioners.

Translation:

The Working Group considered carefully whether to translate the section in English into Te Reo Maori and acknowledged the complexities of being able to not just translate the words but 'translate' the concepts without risking the loss of the essence of the document. At this stage we are urging caution regarding translation.

Note: It is intended that there will be a more full explanation of the Niho Taniwha Framework and history of the development of social work, including the Scope of Practice developed later in the year.