

Obituary: *Ian Gordon Murray 1942-2011*

JAN RICHARDSON

Indefatigable to the end, champion of the welfare and community work profession, Ian Murray lost his struggle against cancer on 12/7/11 in Caritas Christi Hospice, Melbourne. It was typical of Ian during that terrible time that he continued giving to his beloved wife Anne Carson and his son Evin Harley-Murray, his other family and friends and his research interests - not denying his suffering but creatively engaging with the people and issues that gave his life meaning.

Ian combined a great sense of fun with an equal sense of the serious, and he used his gifts to advantage the profession to which he was committed from the age of about 26 when he began a Social Work degree at Sydney University. This followed a change from his original plan to enter the Methodist Ministry. His enquiring mind led him in 1970 to travel through Europe and Asia with his then wife Gayle Duncan. In USA he was employed as a psychiatric social worker before returning alone in 1975 and entering academia from 1976 until 1998, when he retired from the paid workforce. During that time his marriage from 1991 to 1999 to Anna Harley produced his treasured son, Evin.

As a lecturer in Welfare Studies and later the BA Human Services at the Caulfield Institute of Technology, which amalgamated with Monash University, he honed his research skills and developed in-depth knowledge of the industry. Living out its ideals of contributing to society in a voluntary as well as paid capacity, Ian also put energy into developing the professional organization, AIWCW. He joined the Vic/SA/Tas Branch in 1988 and immediately became involved as a committee and Executive member. From 1988 until his retirement from voluntary work in 2010 he was the vigorous intellectual leader of AIWCW at both Branch and National level. It is possible that his retirement coincided with his meeting Anne Carson, whom he married in July 2010!

Ian's work through AIWCW for the human services profession is easy to recite and hard to believe – difficult even if he were fully employed to do the work that he undertook. Knowing that it was all voluntary adds to our astonishment at the rate of his productivity and depth of his thinking. He was a prodigious worker, forgiving of us lesser mortals who liked to sleep at normal times and balance our work/private lives, but secretly impatient. At Branch or National Executive meetings he continuously stretched the organisation's representation of its members' interests and the needs of welfare services clients, both on an individual and national level. A primary interest was the education of new workers. His input was based on

sound research or intuition about future trends, and could not be ignored by those of his fellow committee members who wanted the meetings to end within the scheduled two hours. Ian would come prepared with copious evidence and arguments followed up with proposals for action. Even his busy role as National President 1996-98 did not inhibit his creativity and enquiry into issues that he perceived would become significant, often well before the State bureaucracy tasked with managing them. Some of these issues were:

- (1) Assessment of equivalency of standards of English for migrants against qualifications recognised in Australia for migration purposes.
- (2) Setting up assessment standards for accrediting welfare and community work courses at TAFE colleges and universities, which he managed as Chairperson of the assessment panel.
- (3) Challenging the Community Services Training Packages, about which he prepared a submission endorsed by the National Executive and submitted to the National Industry Training Board arguing that the courses needed to include field work.
- (4) Searching for a central office for AIWCW instead of using his office at Monash. In 2000 this resulted in the office at Ross House in Collins St Melbourne and ultimately the full-time employment of Deane Welsh as Office Manager who could then provide a wider range of services to members and students than volunteers were able to do.
- (5) The English language problem for international students – Ian’s perseverance initiated AIWCW’s engagement of a consultant to examine the issue and recommend the IELTS level necessary to study AIWCW-accredited courses.
- (6) The unrecognised but supported equivalence in value with social workers of the work done by university-educated welfare and community workers, a goal that was not achieved.
- (7) Creating this e-journal and AIWCW’s partnership with Monash University in that enterprise – Ian’s role was pivotal to the successful negotiations.
- (8) Incorporating AIWCW – Ian was President during the process that finally achieved incorporation in 1998.

Throughout Ian’s membership of AIWCW he provided stimulating, original ideas and inclusive leadership. In 2001 and 2007 he conducted surveys of members to ascertain their needs and so influence the direction of their professional association. He researched and wrote papers on topics that were vitally important to the industry but which otherwise AIWCW would not have had the capacity to address. His many journal articles, conference papers, specialist committee representations and other public campaign materials are discussed in AIWCW’s 2010 history *Working for Welfare* by Fay Woodhouse.

Ian’s constant research of trends in the industry and determination that AIWCW should be current and actively involved in working for change to benefit its members, courses and

clients of services, often rendered his colleagues exhausted, all of whom were volunteers and most of whom had demanding jobs. But Ian's tenacity and irrefutable arguments based on sound scholarship usually convinced any unbelievers and resulted in an organisation managed by volunteers having influence beyond reason. Thanks to Ian's unusual capacity to talk and write at the same time, and his trade-mark note-taking of everything he and others said or read, his observations were always astute and his recommendations highly respected. In his 22 years of voluntary work for AIWCW and the human service field, Ian made a remarkable contribution for which he was awarded Life Membership of AIWCW (now ACWA). A Scholarship will be established in his name.

As a former volunteer with AIWCW whose admiration for Ian only just exceeded exhaustion caused by his unquenchable energy and instigation of new projects, I hold him up as an outstanding representative of our profession. I weep for the loss of this beautiful man.

Dr Jan Richardson is a member of Practice Reflexions Editorial Board, a former member of the AIWCW (now ACWA) executive and a current ACWA member