

## **Editorial: *Responding to the times***

This third issue of Practice Reflexions continues our theme of reflecting on good practice, and on the theoretical insights from which it draws its strength. More than ever, our professional field needs social, welfare and community workers with a strong sense of their purpose, their potential for facilitating positive change, and their willingness to engage with the complexities of our society, not just the complexities of our organisations. The last month or two has seen the most extraordinarily rapid advance towards global economic crisis, guaranteeing a harsher reality for our clients and our communities, leaving us breathless and unprepared for the additional pain, financial exposure and reduced opportunities for so many of our fellow citizens. We need to be good practitioners and bottom-up policy advisers in order to respond creatively to the challenges brought by new conditions.

One creative response to poverty is explored in this issue by Klaus Serr's paper. His action research with a group of disadvantaged people aims to build with them a sustainable social enterprise. He provides us with an example, and potentially a transferable model, of practice that unpacks the elements required to create a process of empowerment based on genuine participation. In his case it is for a group whose members have had limited access to education, ongoing employment, and formal engagement with decision-making and the skills that underpin it. Sandy Joffe and Val Kay's paper takes an alternative approach to addressing poverty. They present a project that has worked with community agencies to facilitate clients telling their stories of being affected by the Welfare to Work policy, clothing statistics in personal experience, and influencing the policy process.

Other stories of practice are told in this issue. Wendy Wondrock and Sandra Taylor's paper also personalizes the impersonal with a single case study insight into the lived experience of a man caring for his wife who has Alzheimer's Disease. Such knowledge, when grounded in the methodological, gerontological and practice-based literature it is, becomes the basis for strong practice. Strengthening knowledge-guided practice is the theme of Yvonne Darlington and Jennifer Osmond's paper. They explore a research and training process they have led to encourage practitioners to re-engage consciously with theory, and to build into their practice, and into their organisations' commitment to them, the means by which they can give time and energy to their continuing professional development. The participants in their study acknowledge, among other things, the value to their practice in better informed and more confident decision-making, and the professional satisfaction of contributing to best practice.

We are keen to publish work that demonstrates some of the scaffolding of good practice. This will often start in earnest with the self-conscious and reflexive process of an undergraduate student intelligently analysing her placement experience which has required her to 'integrate theory and practice' – an expression we use almost glibly, but which becomes a profound process of discovery, and, if she is fortunate, equips her for a professional life of reflective and reflexive practice. We hope that in reading the student paper we have published by Audrey Matthews, we will encourage other students to send us for consideration their well-conceived assignments or papers that reflect Practice Reflexions' vision statement.

Finally in this issue, we want to draw to your attention our ‘cousin’ journal, *New Community Quarterly*, which concentrates on excellent community development practice, and invites you to engage in a wealth of related activities that it promotes and discusses.

We also want to remind you about our on-line discussion group, which you can join by clicking on the link on our homepage. While a number of you have joined, not many of you have sent an email to the list yet. We are grateful to those of you who have contributed their thoughts on practice or policy, raised a contentious point for discussion, or responded to others’ ideas, and we would love to encourage more of you to join and help create this on-line community-in-dialogue, exploring the issues that matter to you.

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