70th ANNIVERSARY OF SOCIAL WORK AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

It is now 70 years since the generic social work training course, which had been started in 1933 by the Board of Social Studies (under the Council on Social Training), was welcomed into the University of Melbourne. In the words of Professor Boyce Gibson "the pioneers in voluntary social work had reached that point of success at which the results of their practical experience had to be welded into a theory and supported by a study of social sciences". The University has supported this endeavor from the outset although in the 70 years the location of the school or department has changed in response to changing needs. More recently Social Work relocated to the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences in 2007 and became a Department within the Melbourne School of Health Sciences in 2009. Being situated in a professional school has benefits for research and practice.

As noted above training for Social Work commenced before being embraced by the University. The full history is set out on the University of Melbourne Social Work website http://www.socialwork.unimelb.edu.au/about_us as follows:

1929: the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners was established. This is generally regarded as the beginning of Victorian social work education. The Institute offered a two-year course incorporating some general social work education and more specific almoner training until 1933.

1931: a meeting of the Council for Mental Hygiene, the Institute of Hospital Almoners, the Charity Organisation Society, the Central Council of Benevolent Societies, and the National YMCA appointed a Committee on Social Training to investigate the establishment of a general course of social work training, preferably at the University of Melbourne. A Board of Studies was subsequently appointed to supervise a social work course.

1933: the general course of social work training commenced. Later that year the Victorian Council on Social Training took over the Committee's work and offered a two-year general social work diploma course.

1941: responsibility for the general social work course was transferred to the University of Melbourne.

1947: the course was extended to three years to allow for specialization in the third year.

1949: the Board of Social Studies at the University took over the training responsibilities of the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners, which
subsequently closed.

1974: the three-year Diploma of Social Studies was replaced by a Bachelor of Social Work degree providing two years of intensive professional social work education, generally following completion of an Arts degree. The Board remained the governing body for the Social Work course until 1989.

1989: the Department of Social Studies was incorporated into the Faculty of Arts as the Department of Social Work (later the School of Social Work).

2007: the School of Social Work was relocated within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences, thereby forming the School of Nursing and Social Work.

2009: Social Work formed part of the Melbourne School of Health Sciences, together with Nursing and Physiotherapy.

Along with the 70th Anniversary of Social Work at the University of Sydney and the beginnings of the Association of Social Workers some 10 years later this anniversary at the University of Melbourne is an important milestone in the emergence of the profession of social work.

To mark it the Alumni Association and the Staff of the Department of Social Work are holding a Colloquium on 13 and 14 February 2011 at the University and invite all Social Workers and interested others to participate and to celebrate.

This 70th Anniversary Colloquium will provide an opportunity to meet with others, to reflect on what this particular education has meant for Social Workers lives and careers and for the wider community and to hear of developments in research and practice. Importantly, it will also provide a forum to discuss emerging issues and to share our thinking on how social work education can continue through the 21st century to meet the changing needs of a globalizing society.

The program begins with the Colloquium Welcome and Celebration Function on Sunday 13th February 5.00-7.00pm.

This is the beginning occasion where attendees can meet and mingle with friends, colleagues and teachers. People can come alone or come with others. The Organizing Committee will help people to meet those they have known. People are welcome to attend just this event.

On Monday 14 FEBRUARY the Colloquium ‘REFLECTIONS AND DIRECTIONS’
will be from 9am to 5.30pm and again there will be opportunities to meet with friends and colleagues and to exchange ideas.

Speakers include:

Professor Marie Connolly
Marie Connolly took up the position as Head of Social Work in the University of Melbourne’s School of Health Sciences in late July. She has spent the last five years as Chief Social Worker in the New Zealand government, a role where she has had the chance to reconnect with practice and develop child welfare practice reforms. She has published extensively and particularly likes to focus on creating ways in which busy practitioners can tap into research and theory through easily accessible practice frameworks. Outside work she enjoys nothing more than looking at art deco buildings, and she has just finished her first novel.

Mr Tom Calma
Tom Calma is an Aboriginal elder from the Kungarakan tribal group. He is a trained social worker and has been involved in Indigenous affairs at a local, state national and international level and worked in the public sector for over 35 years. His numerous roles have included being Race Discrimination Commissioner and most recently Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. He is Co-Chair of the Close the Gap campaign for Indigenous Health Equality and, since February 2010, the National Coordinator to tackle indigenous smoking. He has been appointed to the Ethics council of The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, the new national representative body to give Indigenous people a voice, launched in May 2010.

Professor Dorothy Scott OAM
Dorothy Scott was Director of the initial Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia where she focussed on the development and promotion of a public health approach to child protection. After completing degrees in history and social work at the University of Melbourne she was instrumental in establishing the first sexual assault counselling and later group therapy for women suffering post-partum psychiatric disorders at the Queen Victoria Hospital. Amongst her achievements she later became the Executive Director of The Ian Potter Foundation. Dorothy returned to Melbourne in August 2010 and will continue her work in child protection in various capacities.

A Celebratory Dinner will be held on the evening of MONDAY 14 February. The guest speaker will be:

Professor Patrick McGorry AO
Patrick McGorry is a professor at the University of Melbourne and the executive director of Orygen Youth Health, Australia’s largest youth-focused mental health
organisation. Orygen is world-renowned for both its clinical programme and research centre seeking to provide mental health services for young people that are responsive and respectful. He has been a devoted advocate for over 27 years to improving the lives of young people suffering from mental illness. He was named Australian of the Year for 2010.

For more information and a copy of the program please go to http://www.socialwork.unimelb.edu.au/about_us/alumni

Or contact the Conference Manager, Jenny Crofts, 41 Davison St, Richmond 3121 jennycrofts@ozemail.com.au

Written by Kathy Sanders, Co-Convener of the committee organizing the 70th Anniversary celebrations, assisted by committee members.