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A MODEL OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE IN THE
NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACE

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of

MASTER IN SOCIAL WORK
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is about the provision of social work services in the New Zealand workplace. A central line of argument is taken which proposes that the workplace, which up to now has been neglected as a site for social work practice, can become an important site for the provision of services.

The development of a comprehensive model for occupational social work is the central feature of this thesis. Following the development of the model it is field tested in a case study involving a large employer.

Located in the context of the development of New Zealand industrial relations, this thesis reviews the objections which have been raised when social workers become involved with a profit making organisation. Future possibilities for a specialised field of practice are proposed, making this thesis an early contribution to an analysis of the social work role in this setting.

PREFACE

My interest in this field of social work arises from my involvement in two very different settings. The first was providing relationship seminars for the Workers' Compensation Board in Queensland, Australia. The second was my involvement with the implementation of Employee Assistance Programmes at the Wairoa and Feilding Freezing Works in New Zealand. These gave me the opportunity to closely observe the organisation and direction of Employee Assistance Programmes in New Zealand.

The training staff of Lifeline Ipswich worked with me in the development of the Queensland programmes. It was a most interesting and enjoyable experience establishing the programmes and taking them to centres throughout Queensland. During this time I became aware of great gaps in social service provision.

Anne Tucker, who was at the time Central Regional Manager for Employee Assistance Programme Services, in New Zealand introduced me to these programmes. I am grateful for her enthusiasm, willingness to share knowledge and practical assistance in arranging my involvement in the Synfuel case study contained in this thesis.

The General Manager and staff at Synfuel have been very helpful and open to discussing the strengths and

weaknesses of their programme. I am grateful for the access and information which has been available at this modern industrial plant where the case study was carried out.

Dr Rajen Prasad has guided me throughout the time I have worked on this thesis, a period of time which has been longer than we expected and made more difficult by my status as a part-time, extramural student. More recently Dr Mike O'Brien has also participated in supervision. As thesis supervisors they have both taught me a great deal.

My colleague Dean Henderson has been helpful in reading drafts and commenting on the development of my ideas. Sue Dawson was a great help at the time of final checking of the thesis and Dennis Paxie helped by producing the figures. I also appreciate the help of a number of people who have assisted with typing, finding references, reading drafts and suggesting ways I might develop my thesis.

Finally I acknowledge the support of my extended family who have continued to encourage me and have allowed me the time to press on and complete this work when there were many other things I should have been doing with them. Particular thanks are due to my wife Judy and to Kate, Rachel and Mark who have been very understanding of the importance the thesis has assumed.

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