

CHAPTER 7

Under University Control

The three general social work training bodies entered the war years in a precarious financial position, fearful that even the limited financial support they had previously received would shrink. Yet they could expect a greatly expanded demand for qualified social workers. From the first, each of these independent training bodies had had a firm connection with its local university, and had hoped to be taken over by it. This was now imperative if the Australian training movement was to have any chance at all of meeting war and post-war demands for qualified people.

From Independent to University General Training Bodies

University education for social work had begun many years before in both Britain and the United States. In Britain, the general case for and against the development was crystallised by the mid-1920s.¹ The arguments against pointed out that a university's standard of scholarship was endangered when it undertook training for an occupation which had scarcely formulated its requirements, and which was frequently influenced by those without a university education. In addition, the quality of practical work could not be closely controlled, since it was spread over a wide variety of autonomous social agencies, and its quantity distracted students from the already broad range of subjects they briefly covered. To these arguments,

1 See Elizabeth Macadam. *The Equipment of the Social Worker*, pp. 50–7.

which were usually voiced in academic circles, were added those of some practising social workers who feared that a university training would become increasingly remote from professional practice.

The arguments used to support a university education for social work were varied. The rapidly growing occupational group engaged in social provision should belong in a new 'learned profession'. The university had a social responsibility to recognise this, because it was the main centre of relevant systematic knowledge, scientific and normative, and was in a position to preserve the essential unity of disciplines studying man and society. A university department could draw from many other university departments, and in turn it could make a significant contribution to them. Social work training was a way in which such studies could be of benefit to the community, and, because it needed to be identified with both the city and the university, it broke down the isolation and suspicion of town and gown, to the benefit of each. With its traditions of academic freedom and intellectual integrity, a university provided safeguards against sectional bias, to which social work training was peculiarly prone. Social work students had a demanding practical profession ahead of them, so that the value of study in a university was immense, for liberal attitudes and broad perspectives would be encouraged. Moreover, for social workers a university training gave employment mobility between fields of social work and a qualification of recognised and permanent status.

Swayed by the general argument, and by immediate circumstances which will be examined shortly, the universities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide in the early years of World War II took over general social work training from the New South Wales Board of Social Study and Training, the Victorian Council for Social Training, and the South Australian Board of Social Study. These universities were long-established institutions, predominantly British in tradition.² They were patterned on Scotland's non-residential universities governed by a combination of teachers and citizens, and were similar to many English provincial universities, but without their advantage of geographical proximity. A considerable portion of their not very large revenue came from the state government, which, though it generally refrained from direct interference in university affairs, determined some directions

2 The universities of Sydney and Melbourne were established in the early 1850s, the University of Adelaide in 1874. They are the oldest Australian universities.

of development by specific grants. Governments inclined to support the more 'practical' projects, which weighed against the development of the humanities and social sciences. Arts courses, when they were encouraged, were seen as primarily for training school teachers, and many evening students took them. The universities tended more to be collections of professional training schools than communities of scholars. Only a small minority of staff and students were women. The purpose of a university was not a subject widely discussed.

The dissatisfaction with the standards of the New South Wales Board of Social Study and Training which led to the establishment of a separate almoners' institute in Sydney continued in the late 1930s. A small but important group of overseas-trained almoners in the institute were concerned about the board's course which provided the first two years of the almoners' three-year training. They realised that the financial position of the general training body was becoming desperate and were aware, as was the board itself, that the only secure future for the general training lay with the university; but they wanted it under different personal direction.

Dr Grace Cuthbert, the New South Wales Director of Maternal and Infant Welfare and a member of both the general and almoner training bodies, captured the active interest of the Minister for Education, D.H. Drummond, who in turn consulted the leading almoners. At the beginning of 1939, he informed the Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University that he and the Minister for Health considered that there was an urgent need to put the training of social service workers on a satisfactory footing by placing it under university control. Money would be provided, but it was insisted that the present director should not be reappointed.³

The year 1939 was one of negotiation. In November, Helen Rees, who was in charge of almoner training, drew up for the Vice-Chancellor a comprehensive memorandum on the establishment of a university training body. This suggested both a postgraduate and undergraduate qualification, and pointed out that difficulties connected with the university's control of practical work, a minimum age for students, and the restriction of the course to those personally suited to practise

3 Hon. D.H. Drummond to Dr R.S. Wallace, 4 January 1939 (Fisher Library Archives).

social work, had not proved insuperable in overseas universities.⁴ In February 1940, the Senate of Sydney University agreed that a Board of Studies in Social Work (the name was soon changed to Board of Social Studies) be established to institute an undergraduate diploma, the Minister for Education having indicated that £2,600 would be provided annually for such a course. Despite some opposition, the course was started immediately.

Although many of the personnel of the University's new board were also on the executive of the independent training body, and its students were accepted in mid-course, the Vice-Chancellor insisted that the new university body was quite unrelated to its predecessor. The chairman of the former board implied that the retiring director had been a victim of 'a whispering campaign of the most extensive and imposing character'.⁵ When Aileen Fitzpatrick left the professional social work scene in Sydney, those associated with the training movement had been deeply divided and personal feeling had run high, something which the new training movement could ill afford.

The movement of general training into the university in Melbourne was much less troubled than in Sydney. After the first overtures to Melbourne University in the early 1930s, the matter lay dormant until April 1936 when the university representatives on the Executive of the Victorian Council for Social Training re-opened the question. After some months of debate, negotiations broke down because the training body could not guarantee that it would be financially self-supporting inside the university.

In May 1939, the Vice-Chancellor told the Victorian Council for Social Training that it was 'sponsoring a new professional career', and indicated that the university was willing to cooperate as fully as possible.⁶ One year later, spurred on by the action of Sydney University, the chairman of the executive of the Victorian Council, Professor Boyce Gibson, began negotiations afresh. His memorandum for the Professorial Board was of central importance. It argued that the existing training was run by highly qualified and respected social workers. If the university provided accommodation, the training could

4 Memorandum on the Establishment of a University School of Social Study, November 1939 (Fisher Library Archives).

5 Professor Harvey Sutton to Dr H. Powell, 4 April 1940.

6 J. Medley, Address, Annual Meeting, Victorian Council for Social Training, 10 May 1939.

be self-supporting financially. University recognition was sought because of the saving on overhead costs, the increased likelihood of early government recognition, the greater convenience for the growing number of graduate social work students, and because the University of Sydney had already adopted training. The four problems cited, all of which appeared 'capable of adjustment', were that the existing diploma was sub-graduate, and that it was desired to retain the present training staff, the specially designed lecture courses, and the existing minimum age and selection on personality grounds.⁷

The Professorial Board decided in August 1940 that the training, unchanged, should be incorporated within the university under the control of a University Board of Social Studies. In January 1941, the Department of Social Studies began functioning within the university. The only condition of the transfer was that for three years there would be no cost to the university. The Victorian Council for Social Training stayed in existence until December 1943, primarily to finance the first three years of the new university department.

The most insecure of the three independent general training bodies, that in Adelaide, was the last to be absorbed by its local university. In 1938 it expressed itself categorically in favour of a university training for social work.⁸ In 1940, worried about its financial survival, especially under war conditions, and spurred on by the developments in Sydney and Melbourne, the board requested to be taken over by the Adelaide University. The response was sympathetic – the board's syllabus was included in the University Calendar and university accommodation was provided from the beginning of 1941 – but the obstacle to full incorporation was finance. Sir William Mitchell and Professor McKellar Stewart explicitly stated they would support full incorporation if the board could show that it was self-supporting.

The Adelaide Board had been particularly disappointed by an unsuccessful approach for funds by the three general training bodies to the Commonwealth government in April 1940. A year later, it was again unsuccessful, this time after an individual approach. It also made an application to the Carnegie Corporation of New York, and sent

7 Director, Victorian Council for Social Training, to Dr J. Newman Morris, 24 June 1940, with the Memorandum attached.

8 The South Australian Board of Social Study and Training, Reply to Questionnaire of the League of Nations Social Questions Committee.

a deputation to the Minister for Education requesting an annual grant of £1,000 from the South Australian government to the University of Adelaide for social work training. In 1942, relief came at last when the state government provided the university with money to run the course. A University Board of Social Science was later established to supersede the independent South Australian Board of Social Study and Training.

New Forms of Control?

In their size, composition, and actual membership, the three new university boards were roughly similar to the executive groups of the training bodies they replaced. This meant the representation of a polymorphous mass of agencies was eliminated. The new training bodies now came under the general surveillance of the university governing authorities, the Professorial Board, and the university's chief governing body, the Senate in Sydney, and the Council in Melbourne and Adelaide. The administrative and other requirements of the large complex educational institutions of which they were now a part set real limits to their freedom.

As they came to depend on a share of the general university funds, the ability of the training bodies to have their needs understood and accepted by authorities faced with many competing claims was of crucial importance to their development. In this, the standing of each board's chairman, and the amount of time and energy he was willing and able to give to its affairs, was a most important factor. Being professorial head of a university board was rather different from being head of an independent training body. Only if there were sufficient numbers of academically acceptable qualified social workers was there any chance of their controlling the training. As in the executive groups of the former general training bodies, the new bodies contained few qualified social workers, which meant that the director was still in a peculiarly vital position to determine the shape of the professional education. In the university's largely male, academic environment, it might be expected that the chairman's point of view would be likely to prevail over the director's in the event of conflict.

Although the new boards met rather less frequently than the earlier executive groups, they remained important, because they still had to decide on all policy matters, and this set very definite limits to any independent action taken by the director and chairman, either separately or together.

In Sydney, both the chairman and the director were changed when the training moved into the university. In Melbourne, Professor G.W. Paton⁹ was the new board's chairman until mid-1943, when Professor Boyce Gibson again took the position. Jocelyn Hyslop remained the director, as did Amy Wheaton in Adelaide. The new chairman of the board in Adelaide was Professor J. McKellar Stewart¹⁰ who retained the position until his death in 1953.

The new chairman and director in Sydney, upon whom fell the burden to nurture the university training body after such a troubled birth, were relative newcomers from abroad, Professor A.K. Stout¹¹ and Elizabeth Govan.¹² Both of these had recently been connected with the independent training body but had not taken an active part in its demise. Professor Stout continued as the board's chairman throughout the post-war years. His early association with the social studies course in Edinburgh University was valuable, and he was, in addition, a humanitarian with high academic standards, who saw a university's main function as the maintenance and advancement of learning.

The new Sydney board unsuccessfully advertised in Britain and America for a director who was a university graduate and an experienced qualified social worker. Its temporary appointment of Elizabeth Govan as acting director was extended, and she continued to direct the course until her resignation in mid-1945 to return

9 Knighted in 1957. Professor of Jurisprudence, University of Melbourne, 1931–51; Dean of the Law Faculty, 1943–51; Vice-Chancellor, 1951–; Member of the Executive, Victorian Council for Social Training, 1933–37; Melbourne University Board of Social Studies, 1941–46.

10 Educated at universities of Melbourne, Edinburgh and Marburg; lecturer, Melbourne University; appointed Hughes Professor of Philosophy, Adelaide University, 1923; Vice-Chancellor 1946–48; died at 75; was not very active on the board's behalf.

11 Professor A.K. Stout, MA (Oxon.); son of the distinguished G.F. Stout; lecturer, University of Edinburgh, 1934–39; appointed Professor of Moral and Political Philosophy, Sydney University, 1939. He took an active interest in prison reform in New South Wales.

12 Elizabeth Govan, BA (Hons), MA, Dip. Soc. Sci. (Toronto University), BA (Oxon.). A Scottish Presbyterian background; barely into her 30s when appointed. Public relief work, casework with unmarried mothers and their children; an unhappy year as lecturer and tutor in casework for the NSW Board of Social Study and Training, 1939.

to Canada. Her administrative talent, complete reliability, and exceptional industry placed social work training on a firm footing in the university and helped the acceptance of professional social work in the community.

While these developments were taking place in the control of the general training, the almoners' institutes remained much as before. There were twice as many changes in the membership of the New South Wales Institute's executive group as in its Victorian equivalent, but this was of no great significance, for on the whole the same small group of people continued to control each institute's destiny. Katharine Ogilvie succeeded Helen Rees in 1941 and maintained the high quality of the New South Wales Institute's direction.

The formal machinery for cooperation between the three independent general training bodies, the Australian Council of Schools of Social Work, never really came into operation. The new university bodies had neither the time nor conviction to recast the council and it vanished; but the training bodies did not tackle their wartime problems in isolation from each other. Apart from other considerations, the war and estimated immediate post-war needs of certain Commonwealth government departments and of the Australian Red Cross Society demanded a joint approach.

Representatives of the general training bodies and of the Ministry of Labour and National Service met in Melbourne in July 1941. In February 1942, the director of the Melbourne general training body visited Sydney to discuss industrial welfare courses with the Sydney organising committee. She did this again in July 1943, and also discussed the Australian Red Cross Society's needs with the Sydney board's chairman and director. The following month the directors of the three university boards met in Melbourne to confer with the Director of Medical Services of the Australian Red Cross Society, and with representatives of the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service. In addition, they combined with the chairmen of the Sydney and Melbourne boards in a deputation to the chairman of the Universities Commission. In April 1944, the Sydney board appointed a committee to consider the present and future needs of its course, and suggested a conference between the three boards to consider common problems. This conference took place the following

August. The wartime discussion came to a climax a year later with the conference called in Melbourne by the Director-General of the Department of Post-War Reconstruction.

These interstate discussions in the war years were essentially of an *ad hoc* nature. They did not lay the foundation for regular discussion within the framework of an association of training bodies, as might have been expected for the post-war years.

Training Standards

In her memorandum on establishing a university training body, Helen Rees said it was natural to turn to British models, but many aspects of American training should be considered, especially the care and thought given to instruction in professional technique and to the supervision of students in social agencies. At least in theory, the courses of the independent training bodies had already done this, and the transfer of the general training from independent to university control brought no immediate radical alteration in the content or length of the courses. They still consisted of academic work, made up of background and professional subjects, and a large proportion of fieldwork in the form of supervised work in social agencies and visits of observation. In Sydney and Melbourne in particular, there were changes in the background subjects but they were changes in emphasis. Teaching of social casework continued to dominate the professional academic part of the courses and the supervised fieldwork, but there was an increasing interest in group work.

The length of general training was periodically discussed during the war years. The acute demand for qualified social workers and the need for a longer training pulled in opposite directions and the two-year undergraduate courses remained intact. In July 1941, faced with the prospect of a great expansion of social work and the possibility of employing untrained people, the general training bodies considered shortening their courses. They decided that since newly trained social workers were so often placed in very responsible positions, no shortening of the courses should be contemplated. Instead, each body

was to try to increase the number of its students.¹³ The Melbourne board did in effect extend the length of its course when it decided that, from 1943, students would not be admitted until they had already passed two specified university subjects, but the almoners' institute was unhappy about the arrangement, and in practice it quickly had to be modified because of its effects upon recruiting.

Towards the end of the war, both the Sydney and Melbourne boards discussed a three-year course. This discussion covered provision of specialised training in the third year and its results lie in the post-war years. During the war, the two almoners' institutes continued to provide the only specialised professional courses, and their formal relationship with the new university training bodies was much as it had been with the independent training bodies. Because of the demand for the services of almoners in Red Cross and military hospitals, the Victorian institute decided that, from 1942, the training year would be shortened from 11 to eight months, but the experiment was not repeated. The New South Wales institute did not make even this temporary concession, but it did offer some educational help for social workers in medical settings.

Both the Sydney and the Melbourne boards provided sub-professional courses in industrial welfare during the war years. In addition, the Melbourne board from 1944 to 1948 offered a sub-professional youth leaders' course, out of which a professional specialisation in group work grew.

The need to train industrial welfare officers in Britain had brought government recognition of the British training movement during World War I. Prompted by overseas example, the Australian Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service decided, near the beginning of World War II, that trained industrial welfare officers were needed to foster welfare work in government and private factories. In September 1940 Jean Robertson was appointed. In July of the following year, an emergency training course of six months was discussed with the social work training authorities, and in September, the Melbourne board ran the first course. In all, before the war was out, the Melbourne and Sydney boards each conducted five such

13 *Proceedings of the Conference of Representatives of Departments of Social Studies in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, July 4th-6th, 1941.*

courses. Considerable official pressure was brought to bear on the boards to continue, but they considered the courses very inadequate, and eventually in August 1944 expressed strong opposition to their continuance.¹⁴

These industrial welfare courses were a mixed blessing for the training movement. Certainly they represented official recognition by the Commonwealth government who met all expenses connected with them, and they increased knowledge of the training bodies in government circles. They made a contribution to factory production and strengthened the idea of welfare activity within an industrial setting. Moreover, in Melbourne, they left a post-war residue in the form of a professional specialised course in personnel practice. On the other hand, they placed the staffs of the training bodies, and of fieldwork agencies, under strain and diverted attention and energy away from the diploma courses, and they also dislocated the diploma curricula. Although qualified social workers received substantial concessions, few actually did the courses. Finally, the quality of the industrial welfare students was extremely varied, despite careful selection.

No marked alteration occurred in the number and kinds of teachers who put the wartime curricula into effect. Each university training body, by the end of the war, had increased its staff, but not greatly, and the Adelaide body was by far the worst equipped. Apart from the limitation of finance, qualified staff had been very difficult to obtain, especially from abroad.

The Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University intended at first that its board should not rely to any great extent on part-time teachers, but several were later used because of a shortage of suitable teachers of the background subjects. Nevertheless, there remained a noticeable difference between the Sydney and Melbourne boards; in Melbourne a much higher proportion of the teaching was done by people employed outside the university, and this early pattern persisted throughout the post-war years.

14 *Boards of Social Studies of the Universities of Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney, Report of the Conference held in Sydney, August 16th–17th, 1944.*

A new development took place in Sydney with the appointment to the full-time staff of a teacher of one of the background subjects; this was W.D. Borrie, later Professor of Demography at The Australian National University, whose research work brought the department considerable credit. Quite apart from the obvious community need for social, including social work, research, and the advantage for students to have taken some part in a research project, research activity of staff members was important to the standing of the training bodies in the universities.

The staff members responsible for the classroom teaching in the professional part of the courses were under the same pressure to undertake research as were other members of university staff. In the first two decades of university training for social work in Australia, this key group of teachers, from lack of time, money, inclination, or training, produced very little research and even less of it was published. There is, however, no doubt that the university classroom teaching in the professional subjects was superior to the teaching in the 1930s.

The standard of supervision of students in the fieldwork was also higher because there were increasing numbers of well-qualified supervisors. In Melbourne the regular consultation between the supervisors themselves was continued, and this practice was adopted in Sydney, rather in contrast to pre-war practice. Developments in the same direction also began to appear in Adelaide; but there were factors keeping down the level of supervision. The social agencies were exceptionally busy. Further, marriage was making inroads on the number of experienced supervisors available. A careful assessment of the practical work in Sydney in 1945 pointed to a deterioration in the quality of supervision in the previous two years, mainly because a number of senior social workers had married. Recently qualified social workers were too much 'taken up still with their own development' to make good supervisors, it was asserted.¹⁵

Faith in the educational value of good supervision was particularly evident in Sydney, possibly because its main professional staff members were trained in North America. In 1943, to increase the

15 Sydney University Board of Social Studies, Minutes, 9 October 1945: Report on Practical Work.

number of practical work placements for students and to improve the quality of the supervision, the Sydney board paid half the salary of a senior social worker in the Family Welfare Bureau; and at the end of 1944 the full salary of a fieldwork supervisor working in the same agency. All supervisors were expected to give considerable time and thought to the students' work.¹⁶

In looking at the teaching materials available during the war, there is evidence of some improvement, and much hope for the future. Mainly to construct sound policy for the post-war reconstruction, impetus was given to inquiry into the nature of Australian society both by government and university departments. In June 1941, representatives of the Australian universities and of the Reconstruction Division of the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service met in Canberra to map out a programme of useful research, which included economic, social, political and legal questions. For the rest of the war, inquiry was restricted more by a shortage of qualified research workers than by a lack of money. The social work training bodies played only a small part in this research activity, but at least some of the material resulting from the total programme must have been immediately useful for teaching; and perhaps most important, the encouragement of local research related to social policy laid the foundations for future gains. The Sydney board in 1942 was strongly in favour of the establishment of a Chair of Sociology 'in view of the need for research and the training of research students in this field', but the University's Senate had decided no new chair should be advertised for the duration of the war.

For new material actually dealing with the social services, the reports of the Committee on Social Security should be mentioned. It was beginning to be realised, however, that the findings on social questions by parliamentary committees and Royal Commissions could be open to question.¹⁷ The monthly journal of the New South Wales Council of Social Service was also a welcome addition to local social service material; but the books on social work used in the courses were still almost entirely foreign, and the casework books and articles were all American.

16 See Elizabeth S.L. Govan, Report on Practical Work. A memorandum given to supervisors.

17 See, for example, Norma Parker, *The Field of Social Research in Australia*.

Each of the new university bodies inherited its predecessor's small library. In Adelaide, the collection became fully incorporated in the general university library; in Sydney and Melbourne, it became the nucleus of a specialised collection of the general library held in the Department of Social Studies. The collections could grow only slowly during the war years.

Those responsible for arranging practical work now had a much wider range of agencies from which to choose. In particular, the establishment of family casework agencies was an important addition to the training equipment of the boards; but the opening up of new practical work was being offset to some extent by the inexperience of the qualified staff.

It seems, then, that during the war years, the teaching materials improved to some extent, but there was still much room for future progress. Changes also occurred in the student groups of each of the training bodies, which in turn influenced the nature of post-war qualified social workers.

Selection of students on grounds of age, education, and personal suitability, continued. Apart from the admission of public service cadets at 18 years of age in Sydney, each of the new university training bodies began with an entrance age of 20 years. Soon, however, all three, because of the wartime demand for qualified people, found it expedient to lower the age somewhat for the duration of the war. The educational requirements were much as they had been under the independent boards – a Leaving Certificate or general matriculation, with concessions considered for older applicants. In Melbourne, however, after a two-year transition period when the Leaving Certificate was still sufficient, all applicants were required to have matriculated, and in addition came the requirement of two prerequisite university subjects.

The acceptance of the principle that students for a course should be selected on personality grounds was a new departure for each of the universities. The selection was usually handled by a small sub-committee of the board which included the chairman and the director. In 1942, the Melbourne board decided to use psychological tests to assist in the selection of students. Both the almoners' institutes

continued to have their own selection procedure, but hardly any of the general social work students were rejected for the medical social work courses.

Until midway through the war, student numbers were small, despite the urgent demand for qualified social workers; indeed, the Melbourne board, which had the highest standards of selection, was faced with an alarmingly low number of students. In the latter part of the war, special measures increased considerably the number of social work students in each city, but the Melbourne numbers remained very much lower than those of Sydney.¹⁸ At this stage, the main check to greater numbers appears to have been limited practical work facilities. The device of a training body paying the salary of a fieldwork supervisor working inside an agency was not used extensively.

Of the utmost importance to the development of qualified social work in the immediate post-war years was the continuing pattern, during the war years, of the student body consisting almost entirely of women. In 1940, it seemed that the cadetships from the New South Wales Child Welfare Department, held by some of the Sydney board's students, marked the beginning of a breakthrough into public service, mainly male, circles; but early in 1942, despite the board's protests, the departmental cadets were called up for military service, and the cadetships were temporarily suspended. Although this particular scheme of financial aid to students was halted, in the second half of the war a variety of new financial aid schemes appeared, primarily designed to stimulate recruitment to the social work courses.

Towards the end of 1942, the Sydney board asked the manpower authorities that its women students be reserved from other forms of national service. The Director General of Manpower decided that if women were formally called up, 30 first-year students of the Sydney board, and 20 of the Melbourne board should be reserved for 1943. In the next two years, each of the boards had a reserved 'quota' of students.

In August 1943, a deputation to the chairman of the Universities Commission, established in the previous February, sought financial aid for the students of the three boards. The deputation was

18 For the output of the successful students of each of the boards, see Appendix.

strongly supported by letters from the Vice-Chancellors of Sydney and Melbourne universities, and from authorities connected with Commonwealth, state, municipal, church, and voluntary agencies. These testified to the work of qualified social workers, the current shortage, and the likely shortage in the future, and claimed that financial aid would have desirable effects on the size and quality of the student bodies. Although until then financial aid had only been given to students in degree courses, the Commonwealth government, on advice from the Commission, decided to extend the assistance to a proportion of the reserved women students in these diploma courses. But the government, despite the emerging government demand for qualified people, remained firm in its decision not to reserve male social work students.

The Australian Red Cross Society fully supported the move to obtain government aid for social work students. To increase the number of qualified medical social workers and psychiatric social workers in particular, the society offered a series of scholarships. In September 1943, it offered 12 for qualified social workers to do almoner training the following year, and it offered a further four to experienced qualified social workers to train abroad in psychiatric social work. In January 1944, it offered 16 for the two-year general diploma course in any of the three university training bodies, and the following year, a further 22. Scholarship holders, once trained, had to work for two years as directed by the society.

A few other scholarships became available to students, but the only other financial aid scheme of any size was that of the New South Wales State government to Sydney almoner students. In 1943, £1,300 was granted to the almoners' institute to assist social workers in need of outside aid to do the almoner course. These students had to be willing to work in a public hospital for two years after they qualified.

The various schemes of financial aid represented a significant recognition of the work of qualified social workers. In addition, such aid was responsible for social work students with much more varied social backgrounds. This was an important development, for it weakened the claim that qualified social work was a class activity, an extension of the voluntary welfare work of the middle and upper classes.

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