In the post-war years the Australian social work training authorities, already alive to the British and North American training movements, became increasingly aware of the worldwide development of education for social work. Only five years after World War II, there were at least 373 schools of social work of various kinds in 46 countries, and the United Nations was trying to help them interchange information.¹

The growth of the Australian social work training movement after World War II was not rapid, but by the early 1960s solid gains had been made. By then the minimum professional qualification was a three-year course provided by four universities in the four largest Australian cities. The pioneer almoners’ institute in Victoria no longer existed; the almoners’ institute in New South Wales remained, but without its training function. The three relatively long-established training bodies in the universities of Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide, had gained in strength and functions. They had recently been joined by the University of Queensland in Brisbane, and in Perth it had been approved in principle that the University of Western Australia should train social workers. The host cities and universities of the training bodies had grown to a size which could sustain a substantial development of social work education. Sydney now had over 2 million people, Melbourne almost this number, Brisbane and Adelaide well over half a million each, and Perth rather less than half a million.

Comprehensive University Schools of Social Work

A feature of the post-war years was the development of university schools of social work with both general and specialist training functions, which naturally affected the two almoners’ institutes. When in 1949 Melbourne University’s Board of Social Studies became responsible for training in medical social work, the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners decided to disband; but to retain the interest, knowledge and influence of its members, especially the doctors, a Consultative Panel was established in May 1951 by the local almoners’ association. The panel and the association met later that year, but was then inactive, and in 1954 the association dispensed with it. This severed the last formal link between the medical social work group and the medical profession upon whom it had leaned so heavily in its formative years.

For the greater part of the post-war period, the New South Wales Institute of Hospital Almoners continued largely unchanged in its structure and activities. When the Sydney University assumed full responsibility for training medical social workers in 1956, the New South Wales institute did not follow its Victorian counterpart into oblivion. It remained in existence to retain for medical social work the assistance of the institute’s non-almoner members, and also to register qualified almoners and take an interest in the specialist training in the university.

When the universities assumed new social work training functions, changes were to be expected in the composition of the boards controlling the courses. Immediately after the war, the possible size of Melbourne University’s Board of Social Studies was increased by eight, to include additional people connected with the specialisations to be offered in the third year. In the event, however, few such additions were made. In 1955, perhaps for the first time since the board was established, its membership regulations were closely examined. Eight possible places on the board were unfilled, specialisations were unevenly represented, only one organisation, the Australian Red Cross Society, had an official representative, and the practice had arisen of including full-time staff members. In the subsequent revision of the board’s membership rules, teachers in the course and other university
teachers were included, but representation of agencies was excluded. The board was to nominate not more than 10 additional members who were either fieldwork supervisors or persons otherwise interested in the work, and these were to include people who could speak for the major fields of social work. The 1956 board had over 30 members, an unwieldy number for effective decision-making.

For a decade after the war, the constitution of Sydney University’s Board of Social Studies remained unchanged. Then came reorganisation connected with the inauguration of a postgraduate diploma. A Board of Studies in Social Work replaced the former board. It was exclusively a body of teachers and had a possible membership of 20. To enlist the aid of people outside the university an Advisory Council for Social Work was suggested. The board decided, however, not to form the council; instead, it would co-opt to any of its committees whose purpose was to assist the integration of the work of the social agencies and that of the department, any suitable persons either inside or outside the university. Except for medical social work, such committees were not formed.

There were a few changes in the Adelaide University’s board before 1957, perhaps the most notable being the addition of a representative of the social workers’ association. With the institution of a three-year course, the board, now called the Board of Studies in Social Studies was reorganised. Apart from not more than five people outside the university, all board members were now university authorities, teachers in the course, or other university teachers. In 1958 there were 23 members on the board.

Apparent in these various organisational changes was a further shift towards academic control. Although the qualified social workers became better organised professionally, and an increasing number of them were experienced practitioners and student supervisors, only a few were members of the boards. Communication with the professional field remained largely informal through student supervisors. Few of the practising social workers seem to have had the time, inclination, or opportunity to influence the planning of the courses. The inclusion on the board of the classroom teachers of professional subjects strengthened the chance of their courses having relevance to actual practice only to the extent that they themselves were close to professional practice. Generally, the background subjects remained heavily represented
because of the practical difficulty of discriminating between them, and because the training gained strength within the university from its formal links with many departments. The few board members who had a good working knowledge of social work practice had the difficult task of preventing the social work course from becoming a pawn in the game of academic politics, a game often difficult to follow because of the highly developed powers of rationalisation of the participants.

The influence of the boards can, however, be exaggerated. During the post-war period there was a decrease in their activity. The detailed planning of the course usually rested with the director or with a sub-group of the board which included the director and the chairman. It is impossible to know the extent of power relations within each of the boards. Frequently the boards appear merely to have rubber-stamped decisions or suggestions made by the directors or chairmen; and yet, of course, the board’s existence may have strongly influenced their nature.

A few of the pioneers of the training movement, such as Katharine Ogilvie and Amy Wheaton, continued in influential positions in the post-war years. In addition to these, six others may be mentioned for their positions of influence in the period: Norma Parker, J.A. Cardno, and Dr Morven Brown in Sydney, and Ruth Hoban, Professor R.M. Crawford, and Alison Player in Melbourne.

The first three at various times directed the university training body in Sydney, a contrast to the continuing directorship of Ruth Hoban in Melbourne, and of Amy Wheaton in Adelaide. The story of the Sydney directorship focused attention on the difficulty at this stage of obtaining as head of a university school of social work a person with both high academic standing and professional social work experience and ability.2

When Elizabeth Govan gave notice in July 1944 that she wished to return to Canada the following year, the Sydney Board unsuccessfully advertised for a director with both good academic and professional qualifications. So that a person of high academic standing might be obtained, the position was re-advertised at a higher salary and the professional qualification was not specified. In July 1945,

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2 See Memorandum to Professor Stout, 19 March 1945.
Elizabeth Govan resigned, and Norma Parker, an experienced qualified social worker just returned from North America, was appointed acting director. The new director, J.A. Cardno, took up his post in August 1946, and Norma Parker was appointed senior lecturer in social casework, to be responsible to the director for the supervision and control of the teaching of theory and the organisation of practice in social casework. It was a difficult arrangement whatever the personal characteristics of the people involved, but it was made even more difficult because the inexperienced new director felt unable to act with any confidence. This made the leading social workers impatient, for opportunities presented by the immediate post-war years were being lost. Eventually in March 1949, Norma Parker was again the board’s acting director.

For more than five years the director’s post was unfilled while the place of the Department of Social Studies was being reassessed. In 1955, at the time the university instituted a postgraduate diploma in social work, another academic director, Dr Morven Brown, was appointed. He was responsible for the department’s overall administration, and Norma Parker, now appointed Supervisor of Professional Training, had immediate control of the professional aspects of the course, both within the university and the community. Because this director knew the Sydney community and university scene, was familiar with social work, and also enjoyed a good personal relationship with the Supervisor of Professional Training, the arrangement worked; but in 1958, Dr Brown left to occupy the first Chair of Sociology in Australia (at the University of New South Wales), and again Norma Parker became acting director. In 1959 there was appointed another academic director, T. Brennan, a highly regarded British urban sociologist.

As an interim measure until a suitably qualified professional director was available, the choice of an academic director of a university school of social work could be well justified. It was, however, like having

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3 J.A. Cardno, MA (double first-class honours), University of Aberdeen; BA (first class) (Cantab.); Board of Trade, 1941–44; Ministry of Information, 1944. A Scot in his early 30s.
4 Dr Morven Brown, PhD (London), MA, Dip. Ed. (Sydney); 1943–48, Lecturer-in-Charge of child welfare courses, Sydney Teachers’ College; 1948–49, Australian Carnegie Fellow; 1949–50, Senior Research Fellow, University of London Institute of Education; 1952–54, Senior Lecturer in Education, Sydney University. His new status was Reader.
a physiologist as head of a medical school. The arrangement created difficulties and, long-term, the status and effectiveness of professional social work were affected.

Throughout the post-war period, Norma Parker\(^5\) held the Sydney training body together. Yet her interest was not in administration; she was primarily a first-rate practitioner and teacher of social casework. Her position, experience, warmth, optimism, and stamina, combined to give her unparalleled respect and influence among Australian social workers in this period. After being a vigorous president of the New South Wales Social Workers’ Association, 1940–43, in the immediate post-war years she played an important part in the formation of the Australian Association of Social Workers, and was its president, 1946–53. Among her many wishes was for Australia to have a national body representing the major social welfare agencies, and she did much towards the eventual establishment of the Australian Council of Social Service.

Turning to the Melbourne training movement, one person, Ruth Hoban,\(^6\) was dominant in these post-war years. When Jocelyn Hyslop resigned at the beginning of 1945, Ruth Hoban became acting director. Within a few months Melbourne University’s Board of Social Studies unanimously agreed she should fill the director’s position. She was an active president of the Victorian Social Workers’ Association from 1943 to 1945, but in the post-war period she devoted most of her attention to building up the standards, particularly the academic, of the professional education. This policy and the way it

\(^5\) Norma Parker, MA (Western Australia), Dip. Soc. Sci. (postgraduate; specialised in psychiatric social work), National Catholic School of Social Science, Washington, DC; 1931, social agencies in Cleveland and Los Angeles; 1932, Certificate of Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners, first almoner, St Vincent’s Hospital, Melbourne; 1936, first almoner, St Vincent’s Hospital, Sydney; 1941–43, Assistant Director, Sydney University Board of Social Studies; 1943–44, first psychiatric social worker, Callan Park Mental Hospital, Sydney; 1944–45, Fellowship of the Commonwealth Fund of USA for study in Chicago; 1951–52, Fulbright travel grant and a Smith Mundt scholarship to study social research methods at the School of Social Service Administration, University of Chicago. Her original interest in social work was aroused in Perth by a progressive Director of Catholic Education and a psychologist with a Stanford University doctorate.

\(^6\) Ruth Hoban, B.Com., BA, Dip. Ed. (Melbourne). Daughter of a prominent Methodist minister, a leader in his church’s social services. Five years’ school teaching; one year of library work and economic research, Victorian State Electricity Commission; Certificate of Social Science and Administration (London); social worker, Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, then the Victorian State Housing Commission; 1940, lectured in Economics to social work students; 1942, became full-time staff member, Department of Social Studies, Melbourne University; 1951–52, Carnegie Travelling Fellowship, Europe and USA.
was implemented did not go uncriticised. There were complaints that the training body was providing too few qualified social workers, that students were being overburdened, that the training authorities did not take into their confidence the people in the fields of social service, and that in general the training authorities had become separated from social work practice. Yet it was in Melbourne, largely because of the insistence on high academic standards, first by Jocelyn Hyslop then by Ruth Hoban, that the rightful place of the professional training in the university was never questioned in the way it was in Sydney and Adelaide. Moreover, it was in Melbourne that a real breakthrough in social workers’ salaries came in the late 1950s, and this was largely because of the high level of the basic training. In 1957, Melbourne University recognised the soundness of Ruth Hoban’s achievement by appointing her an Associate Professor, the highest academic rank achieved by any of the Australian social work teachers. In 1962, she resigned as the department’s director to take up a university research position.

Ruth Hoban’s final years as director were marred by an episode which was unfortunate both for the individuals concerned and the training body. It was alleged that in her absence on study leave, a Communist plot was hatched in the department. This received nationwide publicity by the *Bulletin*, and eventually the university instituted an official inquiry. The charges were found to be groundless, but meanwhile irreparable damage had been done to certain personal relationships.

No one in Melbourne rivalled Professor Stout’s continuing chairmanship of the board in Sydney. Professor R.M. Crawford was, however, the Melbourne board’s chairman, 1948–50 and 1954–57, and throughout the board’s existence was concerned with its work. This interest was of considerable value because of his standing within the university where he had built a strong history school.
Alison Player was Dorothy Bethune’s successor in directing almoner training in Melbourne. In 1950 she again became primarily a practitioner, and from 1950 to 1952 she was president of the Australian Association of Almoners, and 1953–59 was the second president of the Australian Association of Social Workers (its third was Elizabeth Ward, also a medical social worker). Although originally trained in the tradition of the English almoner, Alison Player’s experience in social casework in North America made her representative of a newer kind of Australian almoner, one who identified more strongly with the social work profession as a whole, and who placed an emphasis on casework in the practice of medical social work. Her personal qualities inspired general confidence, among her colleagues and in the community.

So far, attention has been concentrated on the three cities with training bodies since the 1930s. For about 20 years, on and off, a small group in Brisbane contemplated following the lead of these southern cities but not until 1956 was a social work course started.

In the early post-war years the main pressure for a social work course at the Queensland University came from the newly formed Queensland Council of Social Agencies and from the National Council of Women. Later the pressure was continued by the social workers’ association and by leading interstate social workers such as Norma Parker and Lyra Taylor. Money for the university to run a course, and adequate supervision of students in their fieldwork, were the two main problems to be overcome. Eventually, in 1954, the University of Queensland decided to train social workers.

When the training began two years later, only 10 qualified social workers were employed in the whole state, an alarming situation for those responsible for supervision standards in the fieldwork of the new course. In the beginning, the training was to be conducted by

8 Certificate of the Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners, 1935; almoner at Geelong and District Hospital; almoner at Alfred Hospital; almoner experience in UK then USA, 1939; 1940, almoner at Alfred Hospital; 1941–44, Director, Family Welfare Bureau, Sydney; 1945, Directress of Training, Victorian Institute of Hospital Almoners and Chief Almoner, Royal Melbourne Hospital; March 1946 – July 1948, study and observation in UK and USA; 1949, part-time lecturer in medical social work, Melbourne University Board of Social Studies, and part-time associate almoner, Royal Melbourne Hospital; 1950, Senior Almoner, Alfred Hospital; 1957, Deputy Superintendent, ‘Turana’, a Children's Welfare Department institution; 1958, married Hamish Mathew; later returned to child welfare work.

a Department of Social Studies within the Faculty of Education and under the general direction of Professor F.J. Schonell. A Board of Social Studies representing different faculties was to watch over the course.

When the small group of qualified social workers in Perth formed a professional association immediately after the war, they stated their intention ‘to help in the eventual promotion of a course in Social Studies at the University of Western Australia’. Without a local school, the growth of professional social work, as in Brisbane, was very slow. Many positions for qualified social workers went unfilled, were filled by untrained people, or were filled temporarily by qualified social workers, from interstate or abroad. In 1954, only 12 qualified social workers were in employment throughout the city. The following year their association was forced to become more active in promoting a school because an in-service training course for officers of the State Child Welfare Department was established at the Technical College, and the association feared that, unless a university school of social work were founded, professional social work status would be given to people with this sub-professional training. In the next four years, its Standing Committee for Professional Education urged the case for a school, and by the end of 1959 the Professorial Board and Senate had approved in principle that the University of Western Australia should train social workers. Once finance was available, a Board of Social Work was to control the course which was likely to be at a postgraduate level.

When this course was established, the only capital city \(^{10}\) without a university school of social work was Hobart, a city about a quarter of the size of Perth. The concentration of population in the capital cities was such that, in future, new schools of social work were likely to develop in the second universities emerging in the largest of the capitals, rather than in the nation’s other, smaller, cities; but as yet there was no association of university schools of social work which could provide guidance to any newcomers.

In 1948, the social workers’ professional association considered suggesting to the then three schools of social work that an Australia-wide body should be considering training standards, but nothing was done. In August 1955, the Melbourne school took the opportunity

\(^{10}\) Apart from the small but rapidly growing national capital.
of a national conference of the professional association to call representatives of the schools together. The view was expressed that fairly frequent communication between the schools was valuable, but that a formal organisation was unwarranted since it could only be for an exchange of ideas and information. In 1956, representatives of the Sydney and Adelaide schools met. Shortly afterwards all four schools were represented at a meeting in Melbourne with the social workers’ association, who had considered it had not taken enough responsibility for professional education as a whole. In future, similar meetings were to be held at the time of each biennial conference of the professional body. Those responsible for this development were mindful of the comprehensive American Council on Social Work Education which had begun to operate in 1952.

Changing Curricula

The recasting of the social work courses which accompanied the various organisational changes in the Australian training movement in these post-war years should be seen against a general reassessment taking place overseas. Major studies in both Britain and the United States, quadrennial international surveys by the United Nations, and widespread discussion in the professional journals were available to Australian social work teachers – to clarify or confirm their thinking, to suggest new solutions to similar problems, and to break down their sense of isolation.

Shortly after the war Ruth Hoban singled out five developments which were behind much of the replanning of courses that was taking place: the growing emphasis on the need for preventive social work, the realisation that basically all social work is the same, the realisation that valuable social work knowledge can be taught in the class room as well as in the field, the recognition of the need for the development of the student’s personality, and the recognition of the need for social research. 11

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The main points at issue during the post-war years were the length and level of the training, the place and nature of specialisation (by method, by setting, or both), selection among specialisations, the amount of fieldwork and its timing, and the use of specially designed background subjects. Local pressures inside and outside the universities as well as general trends determined the actual balance maintained by the individual schools between these interrelated factors.

In 1947, the Melbourne school extended its diploma course to three years. At no stage in the protracted preceding discussions had a postgraduate training been suggested, even as a long-term goal. Under the new curriculum, social biology and social history were included, and since these were accepted as degree subjects, the combined degree and diploma could still be covered in four years. After two years of general social casework, students could now choose in their third year between medical social work, family casework, group work, and personnel practice. Why these particular specialisations?

The almoners’ institute had closely examined the proposals of the Board of Social Studies, and generally favoured university training as long as an almoner’s course would not be lengthened or the specialist training standards lowered. The board’s plans included some reduction of fieldwork in the almoner student’s third year, but the institute had eventually agreed that the better planning and coordination of the total training would maintain standards, and in May 1945 it had decided to relinquish fully its training function.

The second of the specialisations offered, family casework (including child welfare), was more closely linked with the preceding two years of the course than were the other specialisations, for family agencies were the traditional casework setting. In effect, this was the choice for the general practitioner.

The third and fourth of the specialisations offered, group work and personnel practice, were mainly developments from sub-professional courses run by the board. In response to fairly long-standing pressure, a one-year youth leadership course had been started in 1944. At the end of 1947 when 73 students had entered the course, the board decided it should end the following year. Emergency conditions no longer existed and the students had proved of disappointing quality, which meant that group work was suffering from poor leadership,
and some of the more responsible group work posts remained unfilled. In future the board was to concentrate on a group work specialisation in the full professional diploma. Diploma students had already learnt something of group work, but now this new specialisation meant that some would be trained specifically as group workers, albeit on a casework base. The development was in line with the accelerated growth of professional education in group work which took place in the United States in the 1940s.

While the final emergency industrial welfare course was in progress in 1944, the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service had urged the Board of Social Studies to provide a one-year course, especially designed for ex-servicemen and women, in industrial welfare. The board had done this, but had also set up a committee to consider the future of such training. In August 1945 the board endorsed this committee’s view that it should be a third-year specialisation in the full diploma course. In the subsequent discussion of a curriculum, the chief question was the amount of basic social work training the students specialising in personnel practice should do. In some large overseas companies a qualified social worker was part of the personnel team; in Australia, where companies were smaller, the personnel officer usually had other duties as well as social work. The question as to whether one person could in practice combine social work and management had not received much attention.

Notably absent amongst the specialisations offered was psychiatric social work. The board had considered that such training should come only after experience in general social work and as yet there were too many practical difficulties in its way.\(^\text{12}\)

The 1947 reorganisation of the Melbourne curriculum was its most comprehensive, but there were others. Five trends are discernible in the following decade – the increasing number of combinations in which diploma students could also take degrees, some reduction in the proportion of fieldwork in the total course, the provision of a research degree, the movement of the diploma itself towards a degree, and the shift to a more fully generic course.

\(^{12}\) In 1950, the Minister for Health sent to London a senior social worker who, on her return, was to assist the board to train psychiatric social workers, but illness upset the plan.
The main features in chronological sequence were: in 1949 the total fieldwork in the course was reduced from 12 and a half months to 11; two years later, it became possible for the diploma to be taken with an Honours Arts degree, in psychology, in philosophy, or in history, and a combined diploma and commerce degree was opened to all specialisations, not only to personnel practice. In addition, a new course, ‘The Philosophy and Method of Social Work’, was introduced in the third specialised year to encourage students to identify with the profession as a whole rather than with a particular setting.

The introduction, in 1953, of examination papers in the professional subjects, Social Work I, II, and III, indicated their increased academic standing. During the same year the teaching staff of the Department of Social Studies discussed the future of the training, and the board adopted their conclusions. Social work was seen as a discipline in its own right with a developing body of theory which justified the establishment of a degree course (if this seemed wise on other grounds), and also a provision for advanced studies and research in social work. One result of the discussion was to make available to graduate social work students a Master of Arts degree supervised by the department.

From 1954, the department offered only two courses. One was for personnel officers; the other was mainly a generic social work course in which the only specialisation was either social casework or social group work as part of Social Work III. In 1956, the amount of fieldwork in the third year of the course was reduced because of the burden on students. In the following year the question as to whether the diploma should become a full degree was discussed again.

By the late 1950s, these developments had produced an improved curriculum. The academic content was now generally acknowledged to be of degree standard, but there was less certainty about the quality of the fieldwork. The amount packed into the course placed a heavy load on students, and unless there were to be further inroads into the fieldwork requirements, the extension of the course to four years appeared to be warranted. The trend towards the same basic professional training for all social workers based on common method and philosophy had closely matched American developments,

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13 Melbourne University Board of Social Studies, Minutes, 23 November 1953.
but some, particularly among the medical social workers, were still unconvinced that generic training produced better professional practice.

Although by the late 1950s, the Sydney board provided a curriculum similar to Melbourne’s in its length and level, the route it had followed since the war was markedly different, mainly because of its wish for postgraduate training and the instability of its directorship. In 1944, the board agreed with its policy committee that the ultimate aim should be a postgraduate diploma, and that a three-year diploma course including specialisations could be introduced as a transitional stage. In 1945, the board considered the latter development desirable, and it resisted pressure to provide various new *ad hoc* one-year courses – in industrial welfare, youth leadership, and housing management. The following year, through its curriculum committee, the board effected a better integration of the existing lecture courses and eliminated overlapping in some subjects, but it would make no major changes until the new director arrived and until university plans for a degree in social sciences were settled.

Between October 1946 and April 1948, the long-term development of the social studies course was considered by a committee of the board. It eventually recommended a postgraduate course, with specialisation, to begin in 1949, and a three-year undergraduate diploma for an indefinite interim period. The board, however, decided to concentrate for the present on an undergraduate three-year diploma. The Senate subsequently approved in principle a three-year course with specialisations in the third year, but it could not be instituted because of a general shortage of university funds. Meanwhile, in 1949, there was one development for which many people had worked over a number of years: this was the introduction of Principles and Practice of Group Work as an alternative to Social Case Work in the second year.

A new phase in the discussion of the future of the Sydney course began early in 1950. The Vice-Chancellor saw the appointment of a new director as closely bound up with this question, and appointed a powerful committee, consisting of seven professors (including the redoubtable John Anderson), Norma Parker and Katharine Ogilvie, to advise him. Its report, presented the following year, was a landmark in the academic acceptance of social work education in Sydney. Asked to comment on the extent to which the university should contribute
to the training for social work, the committee recommended that it should assume full responsibility. Largely because of insufficient funds, the committee’s main curriculum recommendations were not implemented until 1955, but in 1954, part responsibility for training medical social workers was accepted, in preparation for full responsibility in 1956. For a decade this development had been discussed with the almoners’ institute, but prevarication over the university’s course had delayed it.

The 1955 curriculum change was dramatic but not unexpected. A two-year postgraduate diploma in social work, with specialisation in the second year in medical social work, psychiatric social work, family casework and child welfare, and social group work, was introduced. The existing two-year diploma of social studies was to be retained for a further three years. Because the new postgraduate course attracted hardly any students, a crisis developed in the training movement in Sydney.

In 1957, the board’s director undertook a full appraisal of the situation. He gave nine main reasons for the shortage of postgraduate students. In practically every field there was a shortage of trained social workers. Social work training via Arts took five years, via Economics six years, but psychologists, applied scientists, and many teachers could become professionally qualified in three years. Some intelligent people well suited for social work did not have the particular type of academic interest and application required for a degree. In relation to comparable professions, social work salaries and status were still low, and although better and longer training could assist these, it could not do so rapidly. Social work students could receive Commonwealth government financial assistance, but this compared unfavourably with grants to student teachers. The cost of a long course and the low level of salaries deterred women students, many of whom were destined to work professionally for only a relatively short time. That there were so few opportunities for advancement was a particular obstacle with male students. Uncertainty about the future of the courses had hindered recruitment. Finally, social work training at a postgraduate

14 In an unnamed typescript document.
level was at a competitive disadvantage, for many of its possible students, particularly the best students, were often drawn off into other disciplines at an earlier stage.

The director stated that unless an alternative to the postgraduate diploma was provided, it seemed that important agencies would be forced to look elsewhere for trained staff. The old diploma was condemned as being unworthy of a university. A four-year course for a Bachelor of Social Work degree had much to commend it, but it was against the university’s traditions and also was still unlikely to have sufficient students. A three-year undergraduate diploma was therefore favoured.

Guided by the director’s study, a sub-committee of the board decided that the situation demanded a complete reconstruction of the social work training. The old diploma course was extended for a further year until 1959, when a three-year diploma was at last instituted. In the new diploma, teaching in professional subjects did not begin until the second year. In the third year, which extended to April of the following year, there was a choice between social casework and social group work in Principles of Social Work II. Those who did the former studied generic social casework, and then chose between three casework specialisms, medical social work, psychiatric social work, and family and child welfare. Sydney University’s Department of Social Work was now more than ready for a period of stability and consolidation. In the early 1960s, the Vice-Chancellor was able to testify that the course was now of a graduate standard.

The post-war improvement in university social work courses was not confined to the two largest cities. Until the early 1950s, the Adelaide course appears to have been in a university backwater; but then came a Vice-Chancellor keen to eliminate sub-graduate diploma courses, and some academic newcomers who challenged the right of the social science diploma, in particular, to be in the university. In November 1952 matters were brought to a head when the Board of Studies in Social Science sought from the council, through the university’s Education Committee, a full-time lecturer in group work. The outcome was a committee appointed by the University Council to investigate the scope and nature of the work and the staffing of the Department

15 A.P. Rowe, *If the Gown Fits*, p. 51.
of Social Science. Illness held up the committee’s work, but so did its lack of relevant knowledge. Evidence was gathered from social work training bodies and professional associations throughout Australia and from overseas publications. From the documents Amy Wheaton prepared at the time, it is clear she had fears for the fate of the training she had sustained for so long. She herself favoured a four-year degree course which included professional education, but she realised that this was unacceptable in the university even though there were precedents, such as clinical medicine.

The committee’s eventual resolutions were approved by the University Council in November 1955. The department’s name was changed to ‘Department of Social Studies’. From 1957 the diploma was extended to three years, although graduates in Arts or Economics could complete it in two; and in the final year, specialised training in medical social work was offered. The status of the department’s head was raised, and it seemed that social work training in the university was about to enter a new phase.

A.P. Rowe has said that a university should have imparted to first-degree men:

i. professional knowledge which will be more or less immediately useful in their chosen spheres;

ii. an understanding of the fundamental principles of their professional knowledge, so that they can adapt themselves to a changing world;

iii. a lifelong desire to keep abreast of advances made in their professional fields;

iv. a background of general education, including a knowledge of the history of their subjects, of work in related fields, and of the place of their work in the whole fabric of society; and

v. the almost indefinable results of discussion and friendship with fellow students in the process of leading full university lives.16

This coincides well with the aims of the reformers of social work education in post-war Australia. A four-year professional degree appeared to be the next move in their attainment. The example had

16 Ibid., p. 205.
already been set in 1957 when the University of Queensland offered a four-year Bachelor of Social Studies degree, as well as a three-year diploma.

Different conventions, trends and regulations in the various universities affected the courses and each school had its own problems and opportunities. When the schools met in 1955, they agreed that rather different approaches were probably not harmful, and that experimentation was beneficial. It could be argued, however, that in these later post-war years, there had developed a far deeper understanding of what was needed for a minimum professional education for social work, and experimentation tended to be within agreed limits. Although it is true that comparative studies of Australian curricula had still not been undertaken, neither were studies of the relevance of the education for actual professional practice.

The reward of the post-war struggle for full university recognition was security for the schools of social work in their universities. They had still a long way to go before they enjoyed the reputation of the schools of the established professions, but they had weathered a crucial period in their development. As small units in large, mainly indifferent or unfriendly, educational institutions their patience and endurance had been tested. For the sake of the growth of a genuine social work profession, it was as well that their university hold was made secure.

**Teachers, Teaching Materials, and Students**

Changes in the curricula of the schools were only one aspect of the improvement in education for social work in the post-war years. Better teachers and teaching materials also played their part. Each school increased the number of its full-time staff (in Sydney the increase was from two to eight), and this allowed staff members to improve their teaching; but the background subjects were still often given by people outside the school, particularly in Melbourne; in Sydney and Adelaide, more from other university departments. During these post-war years, all the university departments with which the schools were connected expanded, but their large student numbers made individual teaching difficult, and left teachers with little time for research.
In the immediate post-war years, the Australian Red Cross Society offered each of the three schools financial assistance to increase their teaching facilities. At this time in particular, suitably qualified social work teachers were difficult to obtain, and throughout the whole period a shortage persisted both overseas and in Australia. This meant that the Australian schools often had to resort to makeshift arrangements in the professional subjects in the course. Some overseas social workers did spend periods teaching in Australia, and their contribution was valuable. The increased number of Australian social workers who gained significant academic appointments in the 1950s was a sign of the coming-of-age of the Australian training movement.

Although the uncertain quality of the teaching in fieldwork was still a bar to a degree course, supervision standards received increasing attention during these post-war years. The period opened with a supervisors’ conference in Adelaide addressed by interstate speakers. In the next few years the Sydney and Adelaide schools in particular, with their increased student numbers, were hard-pressed to find suitable supervisors. The former had much greater resources, however; some of its fieldwork supervision was done by staff members or by social workers paid by the school for the time they spent on supervision in their agencies. The relationship between the Sydney school and the agencies that provided fieldwork supervision was generally close and healthy. From 1945 the school conducted courses on supervision, and from 1948 it instituted regular meetings between fieldwork supervisors, students, and classroom teachers.

In Adelaide and Melbourne more development of supervision standards took place in the 1950s. The Adelaide effort, because of staff changes, was intermittent. The Melbourne school attempted a systematic development of student units in a few selected agencies, each unit run by a social worker responsible for classroom teaching on the professional side of the course, but most of the supervision was still done by honorary supervisors in a wide variety of agencies. In 1953 the social workers’ association arranged discussions on students’ supervision, and the following year the school instituted a course for new supervisors. The school’s staff made frequent visits to agencies to discuss supervision problems, and in addition, an annual supervisors’ conference was arranged, whose papers produced the beginning of an Australian literature on student supervision.
During the post-war years it is likely that the teaching in the fieldwork improved, but even in Sydney and Melbourne by the early 1960s, much of it was still being done by relatively inexperienced social workers. The structure of the young profession made this difficult to avoid, unless supervision was to be done mainly within student units run by experienced social workers paid by the schools.

There is no question that the teaching materials in the background subjects improved to some extent. Early in the post-war years, the facilities available for teaching the social sciences to undergraduates were found to be inadequate in every Australian university, and in some, grossly inadequate. Even after the general improvement, sociology still lagged behind. An increasing amount of what could be broadly described as sociological research was undertaken within university departments, but Australian universities were reluctant to form departments specifically responsible for sociological teaching and research.

In these post-war years, then, Australian teaching materials in the social sciences became increasingly available. Much the same could be said of the teaching materials in the professional section of the course. An Australian social work literature began to appear, although very slowly. Moreover, as putting the ‘social’ back into ‘social work’ became the conscious aim of American professional writing, American literature became more relevant for Australian teaching. Because of English and local influences, Australian social work, even in Sydney where American influence was strongest, had never been in tune with the extreme psychiatric orientation found in some of the earlier American literature.

The Sydney school had the best library facilities, in sharp contrast to those of the Adelaide school. In general, the number and size of Australian social work and social science collections increased markedly, although the cost of overseas, especially American, literature was restricting.

18 S.F. Nadel, Sociological Research in Australia, January 1953. Not until the late 1950s did any university have a full department of sociology.
The choice of those responsible for selecting fieldwork placements for students was greatly widened by the spread of professional social work in these post-war years. Because of changing staffs and the relatively short period in which many of the agencies had employed qualified staff, only a few of the agencies, however, could have been illustrations of well-established professional practice. In Sydney there was apparent declining interest in visits of observation as an educational method in the fieldwork.

Even if, by and large, the curricula, the teachers, and the teaching equipment of the schools did improve, what of the students who took the post-war courses? In the immediate post-war years, the number of students, especially in Sydney and Adelaide, increased very considerably, and they included a small group of men, many of them ex-servicemen on Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme grants.¹⁹ The Sydney group was by far the largest, partly because the New South Wales Public Service Board resumed its child welfare cadetships, and because, from 1945 to 1947 men took an evening course. The Board of Social Studies agreed to run this one three-year evening course to allow Child Welfare Department officers to become fully qualified. Relations between the board and the department became strained, however, over the fieldwork these officers were required to do. In the 1950s, the number of cadetships dwindled, and the Child Welfare Department turned to a sub-professional course that had been established at the Sydney Teachers’ College.

If the Director-General of the Commonwealth Department of Social Services had consistently recognised the value of fully qualified administrative staff,²⁰ the number of men students would have increased, but as it happened, apart from the ex-service group after the war, the Child Welfare Department group in Sydney, and a few clergymen, hardly any men chose social work as their professional career, a dismal record after the high hopes of the post-war reconstruction period. Not until the late 1950s in Victoria were the prospects of advancement sufficient for social work to begin to attract

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¹⁹ See Appendix for the number and sex of successful students over these years.
²⁰ Sydney University Board of Social Studies, Minutes, 27 February and 7 March 1946. F.H. Rowe to Miss N. Parker, 3 June 1949.

In the post-war years the amount of government financial aid available to university students was increased. First, there was the Commonwealth’s assistance to ex-servicemen and women and its continued assistance to civilian students; and then, from 1951, its fairly extensive scholarship scheme. This general financial aid increased the number of students, and it also opened to able students a wide choice of subjects with which social work found it difficult to compete in terms of status, salary, and advancement. In Melbourne and Sydney a few agencies provided assistance to social work students, usually on the condition that they were bound to work for them for two or three years after they qualified. Both the Victorian Hospitals and Charities Commission and the New South Wales Hospitals Commission were forced, about the mid-1950s, to adopt such measures to obtain medical social workers (and the latter attached no bond to its aid). Unless such financial aid schemes were attractive enough to add to the total number of social work students, they merely competed internally with each other for recruits. The various post-war schemes of financial aid, did, however, continue the process of broadening their social base.

Some guide to the social background of people qualified by the Sydney university school of social work up to 1957 is given in Table 1.

Table I21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attended a non-Catholic private school</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended a Catholic private school</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total attended a private school</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attended a state school</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information not available</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total number qualified</strong></td>
<td><strong>411</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though the information is incomplete, and the numbers are small, it seems reasonable to make these comments. Since in the period covered by these figures only about one child in every four attended

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21 Compiled from student records in the Department of Social Work.
a private school in New South Wales, private schools were heavily over-represented among the women social work students but not as much among the men students. These are patterns one would expect. Generally a far greater proportion of students from private schools continued to university education than did students from state schools, and possibly there was a higher incidence of people with welfare motives amongst the higher income and church groups, both of which tended to use private schools. The lower proportion of male social work students from private schools is to be expected. It is different for men because of social work’s weak career inducements in the higher socioeconomic groups, and also because a higher percentage of the men received financial aid which presumably allowed a larger proportion of state schools to be represented.

Since, during this period, out of every five children attending a private school about four attended a Roman Catholic school, it is apparent that Roman Catholic schools were under-represented. This is contrary to views sometimes expressed during the period, yet it could be expected because many in the lower socioeconomic groups were attending Roman Catholic schools.

Each of the schools of social work in the post-war years attracted a few first-class students. Most of the Melbourne students combined a degree with their professional qualifications; in Sydney, a considerable proportion did this; in Adelaide, a lesser proportion. When higher standards were sought in the Sydney and Adelaide courses in the later 1950s, the quality of their student bodies could be expected to improve, bringing them into line with the Melbourne school, and certainly this improvement took place in Sydney.

One other feature of the post-war student bodies should be mentioned. The schools of social work had their share of the Asian students who attended Australian universities in this period. The Sydney school became concerned about the cultural relevance of its diploma course for these students, the difficulties they had in adjusting to university study in a strange country, and their consequent high failure rate. After careful study, it instituted in 1955 a special course adapted to their needs. Having drawn for so long on British and American social work experience, the Australian training movement now had the opportunity to make, in turn, some contribution to the needs of less developed countries.
The various developments in these post-war years added up to an improving education for social work. By the early 1960s, each of the schools was ready to follow the Melbourne school’s example of a great increase in the number of its students aided by demographic factors, and with improved salaries and status, this expansion was likely. In 1958, before this wave of expansion had begun, the total cumulative output of the Australian social work training movement since its inception is shown in Table 2.  

**Table 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>875</strong></td>
<td><strong>116</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About 1,000 qualified social workers was a small number in view of the size of the population and the extent of its social provision — especially when only between a third and a half of the qualified social workers were employed as such.

The university schools of social work were still without serious competition from other narrower training schemes. A 1960 study found that at least 300 people were undertaking various sub-professional courses, usually geared to the work of a sponsoring organisation, but only a small proportion of these were matriculated students, and, apart from those in the New South Wales Child Welfare Department, there was no evidence that the status conferred by such courses was as high as that obtained through the full professional qualification.

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22 See also Appendix.
23 Australian Association of Social Workers, Courses in social welfare work offered by organisations other than universities.