



Australian Council of Heads of Social Work Education Inc.

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CEO AASW, Cindy Smith

President AASW, Julianne Whyte

Letter of serious concern from the Australian Council of Heads of Social Work Education (the Council) to the release of the ASWEAS

Despite details provided to members and the broader public by the AASW, in relation to the 2024 ASWEAS, the Council holds serious concerns about (1) their content and (2) the process used to develop them.

Our concerns include the following:

- a lack of clarity in purpose of the ASWEAS
- a lack of transparency and trustworthiness.
- staffing 'inputs' will not allow for 'outcomes' required

1. Clarity of purpose

Accreditation standards and professional regulation are conflated in the ASWEAS document and associated communications. This undermines the integrity of the ASWEAS. The ASWEAS have the explicit and express purpose of accrediting educational standards alone – they are not a vehicle for implementing AASW strategic plans, or the registration of the profession by a national allied health regulator. This conflation diminishes the focus on graduate outcomes and confuses two separate agendas.

2. A lack of transparency and trustworthiness.

No clear consultation methodology for the ASWEAS has been provided, despite claims of widespread consultation. There is no information about how the consultation was designed, how sites of participants were chosen, what data was collected, the reliability of the data, how it was analysed rigorously and or how the data was applied. This leaves the document and process open to criticism, including the possibility that the consultation process was designed to achieve a desired result.

3. Staffing 'inputs' will not allow for 'outcomes' required

We see the benefit of ASWEAS as ensuring that all social work students in Australia enjoy the same minimum standards, regardless of what university they attend.





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However, removing specifications on staffing, and classroom ratios of academic to students for example, removes this assurance and will result in differing quality in learning experiences and graduate outcomes.

We see Field Education as the signature pedagogy of Social Work education. The removal of staffing specifications for Field Education is deeply concerning and would undermine Field Education. Additionally, it is concerning that a AASW communique indicates an intention to 'revisit' the area of placement hours – meaning that this is not a settled standard. We also note that hours of placement relate to quality of learning as well as Australian Social Work degrees having parity with international benchmarks allowing overseas recognition of Australian social work qualifications. This must be a consideration going forward. In short, the 'inputs' must be sufficient to ensure the required 'outcomes'.

The Council is concerned about the absence of a chain of logic: the removal of staffing specification and allowing larger class sizes in skills courses does not concord with an increase in new graduate skills. Lastly and importantly, there is no information about how outcomes will be assessed.

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Chair, ACHSWE

