REGISTRATION OF SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL WORKERS
IMPROVED ACCOUNTABILITY

2036
By the time our State turns 200 years old, I want South Australia to be a place of prosperity. Planning and delivering on my vision for a better future starts now. This policy is just part of our plan to deliver a clear and responsible pathway to recovery and success. See where it fits in below.

1.0 GROWING OUR ECONOMY

2.0 THE BEST EDUCATION SYSTEM

3.0 BEING A HEALTHY STATE

4.0 STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES
   4.1 Protecting the most vulnerable people in our community, especially children

5.0 BUILDING OUR STATE

6.0 ENSURING SAFETY AND JUSTICE

7.0 PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT

8.0 EMBRACING OUR UNIQUE CULTURE

9.0 RUNNING AN EFFICIENT AND STABLE GOVERNMENT
“We are committed to ensuring our most vulnerable are protected by requiring the registration of social workers.”
Currently, there is no legal registration for social workers in any Australian state or territory jurisdiction, which may lead to clients being unaware of the workers’ qualifications, skills and ethical obligations.

Some estimates provide that up to 18,000 social workers around Australia are working outside of a regulatory framework.

In comparison, psychology is a profession that requires registration, with penalties of up to $30,000 for individuals claiming to be a psychologist when not registered.

Social workers are responsible for protecting and enhancing the wellbeing of our community’s most vulnerable and marginalised members who are often ill-equipped to properly judge the quality of service being provided, with the human costs of unsafe or unethical practice are likely to be very high.

It is therefore very important that people working in this profession are suitably trained, qualified and competent and that the people they are interacting with are assured this is the case.

The professional body representing social workers throughout Australia, the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW), has been advocating for a system of professional registration for two decades arguing that sub-standard, unethical or unqualified practice can cause substantial harm to clients, including abuse or even death.

According to the AASW, not all people who call themselves social workers are qualified and a registration system would lead to greater accountability.

This critical reform was also recommended by:

• The Layton Report of the Review of Child Protection in South Australia 14 years ago
• Justice Mullighan in the Children in State Care Commission of Inquiry nine years ago
• State Coroner Mark Johns’ inquest into the death of Chloe Valentine two years ago
• A South Australian Parliamentary Committee two years ago
• The Deputy Coroner in the Baby Ebony case one year ago

Yet it’s been ignored by the State Labor Government.

The longer this important reform is delayed the greater the risk to vulnerable children in South Australia’s completely dysfunctional and chaotic child protection system.
If elected in March 2018, a Marshall Liberal Government will ensure a system of registration for social workers is introduced.

This could involve the inclusion of social workers under the National Registration Accreditation Scheme (NRAS), the government scheme overseeing the regulation of qualifications, standards and practices for health practitioners in Australia.

A State Liberal Government will:

• draft legislation to require the registration of social workers in South Australia
• lobby to have social workers included under the National Registration Accreditation Scheme (NRAS) with oversight from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Registration of social workers would result in a broad range of benefits including:

• improved public safety
• higher standards of conduct and accountability by providing accessible mechanisms for complaints and review
• improved professional development opportunities for people within the profession

This reform has been ignored long enough. It’s time we made changes to better protect the most vulnerable members of our society.
“A Liberal Government will improve child protection outcomes by requiring social workers to be registered.”

Steven Marshall, State Liberal Leader
If you would like to provide feedback on our policy or learn more about our plan, please get in touch via:

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