

Decolonising Social Work

The pastoral enterprise expanded as European settlers claimed more land for economic reasons and the number of British immigrants increased. Indigenous peoples retaliated by seizing animals from European encampments, which Europeans saw as theft. Retaliation followed, ending in a full-fledged fight for land (Morrison et al., 2018). Aboriginal people fought using guerrilla tactics, murdering shepherds and stealing animals from shepherds' locks and huts. It was common to have little pitched battles. European reaction ensued, with the executions of not just warriors but also women and children, largely by the military but also by ordinary people. In certain parts of Australia, the English settlers practised terrorism and genocide to clear Aboriginal people's territory so that the land could be exploited (Jalata, 2016). Because the Europeans took advantage of their rifles, horses, and structured armed forces to prevail in the land conflict as the Aboriginal fighting and warfare skills were small scale and disorganised.

According to Blyton (2015), Aboriginal people drifted towards European townships as their land had been taken and their food supplies were disrupted and European foods, tobacco, and utensils were handier. They attempted to sell labour for goods via their kinship networks resulting in most of them being enslaved by the British settlers and subjected to forced labour in exchange for food and shelter (Brock & Gara, 2017). The dominant society saw them as forlorn survivors, clinging to what was left of their customs and barely surviving. In addition, Aboriginal people were imperilled to régime initiatives that aimed to relocate, "protect," disperse, recruit, and ultimately assimilate them through time (MacDonald & Steenbeek, 2015). Surprisingly, many Aboriginal people in numerous states endured the brutality of early colonial interaction, and there are various examples of Aboriginal tribes within the republic that positively adapted to colonialism and set up new, self-determining ways of life during this time of huge change.

As a consequence of colonialism, Aboriginal peoples are the most underprivileged of all Australians in terms of social-economic and health position. Health and social difficulties have resulted in a shorter life expectancy when compared to the rest of Australia's population (Menzies, 2019). As such, all health and social workers have an ethical duty to assist Aboriginal Australians in bettering their lives. Even though social workers are essential to tackling this issue, encounters between them and members of the Aboriginal community are often characterised by distrust, fear, and hostility (Shahid et al., 2016). This has been shown by prior child protection interventions, such as the Stolen Generations, and by the continuing high levels of involvement for Aboriginal children, which are greater than for non-Aboriginal children. As a result, even though there has been a lot of interaction and intercession, it has not always culminated in operational arrangements and relationships.

Even in its most critical and participative form, social work in Australia, like in other post-colonial minority country nations, is based on imported Euro-Western concepts. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been and continue to be positioned as having a critical need for social services, education, housing, and child protection. As a result, they have been and continue to be seen as passive recipients rather than active participants in the expansion of social work practice (Bennett, 2013). Since the Dreamtime, Indigenous peoples have lived positively and joyfully on their land. They have also acquired exceptional social and community skills. The welfare and social programmes that the British made Indigenous Australians take part in had nothing to do with these institutions (Desai, 2015). In truth, an imperialist, racist ideology drove a systematic attempt to destroy them. The lack of knowledge and understanding of non-Indigenous governments and bureaucrats may help explain why non-Indigenous programmes continue to fail when they are forced on Indigenous people.

According to Egan et al. (2016), mistrust between social workers and Indigenous Australian clients have had a substantial impact on the health and wellbeing of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. Some relationship issues are due to the statutory nature of the profession and are typical in all work with mandated consumers (Modderman et al., 2020). Complex interactions are typical in many professional-Indigenous meetings, both at home and abroad, and are not confined to social work. These difficulties are the consequence of ongoing racism and cultural misunderstanding (Gair et al., 2014). The issue of how to mend broken ties and build stronger, positive links has remained a hot topic in Australian social work circles and broader Australian culture. Many individuals feel that the Australian social work profession should continue to thrive, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partnerships enhancing outcomes for everyone. The value of educational preparation in forming and sustaining these collaborations cannot be overstated.

Cultural misunderstandings are a common theme in literature, producing major issues in encounters between Aboriginals and social workers. Although racism is seldom publicly discussed, the majority of Aboriginal people believe social workers are judgmental and make decisions from a stereotypical standpoint (Bennett et al., 2017). In this regard, social workers should focus on the processes of decolonization and power relinquishment as well as how to engage differently and build trust and respect relationships, which are at the heart of these processes (Mathebane & Sekudu, 2018). These results emphasize the need for great social work practice, which involves culturally appropriate and safe treatments for all client groups, as well as being polite, socially fair, and founded on professional integrity. They provided some interesting ideas on how practitioners might be better trained to attain these aims, particularly with Aboriginal service users (Bennett et al., 2017). Given the challenges of cross-cultural dissimilarities in

perspectives and indulgences of wellbeing, many of these ideas need to be developed more inside social work edification and the career itself into more precise, effective skills. These are some of the problems that come up when judging different points of view, like the "best interests of the child" idea.

Non-Indigenous social workers must be informed of colonial and contemporary experiences and backgrounds to work efficaciously with Indigenous peoples and groups (Beddoe, 2018). Critical social work, postmodern critical social work, and, current critical social work theories should be used by social workers to aid Indigenous Australians in taking over the social work profession. These are the most important Euro-Western ideas about social work for the growth of social work with Indigenous Australians (Morley & Stenhouse, 2020). This is because this approach places a high value on altering the way power operates and carrying out radical, liberating social activity. Because a lot of this tradition is the basis for other social work traditions like social justice, empowerment, anti-oppressive practice, and autonomy, critical social work offers useful ways to work with Indigenous communities that include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous progressive social work reflection.

Social justice has long been at the heart of social work. Equal access to opportunities; equal participation; equitable and adequate resource allocation and redistribution; equal access to and enjoyment of human rights; and fair treatment of all persons by the state and agencies and organizations with the capacity to address fundamental inequality (Taylor et al., 2015). For Aboriginal peoples, social justice has been an inconceivable element in their lives. Social work seems to have had a little part in the achievement of systematic parity for Indigenous peoples. Social workers were implicated in removal and subjugation, predominantly in child welfare and health care, where Indigenous peoples faced great wrongs (Bird & Gray, 2016). Social justice must

be a way of life, not simply a catchphrase. Social justice may become a reality if society has common social justice principles toward which it aspires. When interacting with Indigenous Australians, it should be clear that you support these ideas, hold these values personally and professionally, and work to make them happen.

Throughout the colonial and post-colonial ages, the development of the profession was entwined with the larger social framework. Given the distance between Indigenous communities and white-dominated mainstream culture, few social workers are likely to be conversant with Indigenous issues and the Stolen Generations. The persistent exclusion of Indigenous peoples from the political and legal framework may have impeded efforts to conceive of them as legitimate concerns (Walter & Suina, 2018). In this regard, the concept of social work as an occupation devoted to helping the needs of Australia's Indigenous peoples was still forming. As a consequence, social workers may see the need to use an anti-oppressive approach in their practice. It tackles social partitions and structural imbalances in the work that is done by avoiding the application of restrictive stereotypes or prejudices against social work service users (Havig & Byers, 2019). This means that each being's necessities and rights are taken into account within the limits of structure and society and that everyone is treated the same, no matter their class, ethnicity, gender, social rank, or any cultural biases that may be in place.

Furthermore, the strained relationship between Aboriginal people and social work stems from social work graduates' lack of preparedness to deal with Aboriginal clients. Although the profession has said that Indigenous Australian ways of being, knowing, and doing must be included in social work curriculum and fundamental practice standards, achieving this aim will provide substantial didactic and epistemological difficulties (Bennett et al., 2017). Many of them are a result of Australia's colonial history when Western knowledge systems and practices were the

norms. Children from First Nation Australian families, for example, were taken from their homes with the help of social workers (Harnett & Featherstone, 2020). Because of these and other protectionist and assimilationist strategies, as well as the fact that most social workers have insufficient knowledge about Indigenous Australians culture result in Indigenous communities mistrusting social workers.

For social work graduates, establishing long-term, cooperative working relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander associates and agencies is tough, intimidating, and perplexing. In addition, there is a lack of trust and confidence in the services offered by both indigenous and non-indigenous workers. In Australia, many social work professors do not want Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander points of view in their classes (Bennett et al., 2017). These educators say that their lack of expertise in social work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people makes meeting these new curricular requirements challenging. Even though the Australian social work curriculum often focuses on the history and effects of colonialism, it does not teach developing social workers how to use Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing, and doing.

This connection emphasizes the importance of Aboriginal history and cultural knowledge, as well as the impact of social work interventions on knowledge and skills. By including these topics in the formulation of social work courses, social workers will learn more about the long-term effects of intergenerational trauma and harm on health outcomes such as high mortality, as well as how people's social and cultural ties to their communities are often broken (Bennett et al., 2017). The practitioners also acknowledge how much of this past is lived by Aboriginal people daily, rather than being a footnote in a family's history. Aside from historical knowledge, social workers must also have a cultural understanding of the area, as well as the knowledge of their

colleagues and clients (Bennett, 2013). The emphasis here is on local and interconnected family and community knowledge. This will help social workers to understand how social work affects the lives of Aboriginal people from one generation to the next.

While the history of colonial discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has stained the Australian social work occupation, it continues to play an essential role in society. The profession acknowledged its role in Aboriginal oppression and has continued to evolve, as evidenced by the Indigenous reinterpretation of some of the central doctrines of western critical social work, such as liberation, human rights, social justice, empowerment, autonomy, and respect. It encourages social workers to participate in critical reflection to gain a greater appreciation of power's role in social work intercessions in the historical and contemporary, as well as the perception of those social work as a profession has adversely impacted. The colonial past influences today's relationships, regardless of the good intentions or excellent skills of a social worker.

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