



**EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL WORK**

## **Social work and social media in Aotearoa New Zealand**

PhD Research Proposal

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### **1. Abstract**

There is a well-established presence of social media in society and a growing drive for citizens to develop expertise and wisdom around its use (Kaplan, 2010). It is estimated in our most recent statistics that by the end of 2014 three billion people globally will be using the internet; New Zealand is ranked 30 out of 166 countries in its development of internet technology (International Telecommunication Union, 2014). A more important figure for those interested in social justice is the global estimate that 4.3 billion people do not have internet access; 90% of these people live in the developing world. These realities demand the attention of social workers.

The social presence of internet communication technology (ICT) and social media provide challenges to social workers around issues of safety, professionalism and competence. These tools also offer promise however; there is potential for professional activities such as networking, research, activism and advocacy to be re-invigorated using social media. The complexities and challenges associated with these opportunities have provided inspiration for this thesis.

The questions being asked within this exploratory mixed methods research project are about how social workers in Aotearoa New Zealand use social work professionally, what their opinions and attitudes are toward this, what knowledge social workers feel they require to use social media in a way that is professionally satisfactory to them and how they would like to attain this knowledge. It is hoped that New Zealand social workers will take the opportunity to express their concerns, to share their wisdom, and to be part of a conversation about a phenomenon that is inevitably impacting on our day to day work, with all its promises and perils.

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