

FOREWORD

The 21st issue of the Social Policy Journal of New Zealand comes with a new cover and a new schedule of publication – three issues per year instead of two. The journal will continue to provide a forum for debate across the spectrum of social policy topics, and will now accommodate more papers, more frequently, with the addition of occasional special-theme issues. The papers in Issue 21 cover health, social welfare, human rights, social capital, employment, training, gambling, and a range of research-oriented topics.

Among the health papers are two based on a significant programme of research into the health of women on the Domestic Purposes Benefit, funded by the Health Research Council. Maureen Baker and David Tippen report on the findings of a qualitative interview study, while Heather Worth and Karen McMillan describe the results of a postal questionnaire survey. Both studies explore the impact of health on the entry of these women into the workforce. Liz Jones provides an update on the Domestic Purposes Benefit and the Widows Benefit, describing the changes that have been put into place under the 2002 reforms.

In the employment arena, focusing on New Zealand's employment rights laws, Linda Hill discusses pay equity for women in the context of international conventions that frame this as a basic human right. A paper by Otilie Stolte looks at the Training Opportunities programme, aimed at helping individuals overcome impediments to employment, and examines how its training providers are evaluated.

The Gambling Act 2003 provides the motivation for three of the papers in this volume, all of which delve into issues relating to problem gamblers. Lorna Dyall argues that given gambling's impact on Māori, the legislation that controls it should rather be modelled on the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996. The emergence of one-stop gambling shops and virtual gaming is explored by Bruce Curtis and Terry Austrin. The third gambling paper, by Phillida Bunkle and John Lepper, proposes that future research on gambling in New Zealand move from prevalence studies towards a focus on the socio-economic foundations of gambling behaviour.

Linda Taylor reports on an initiative of the Department of Child Youth and Family Services, the Stronger Communities Action fund, which encourages communities to identify their own social service needs. Her paper examines the impact of this programme on the community's levels of social capital. The development of social capital was found to be an important theme at the University of New South Wales during the annual conference run by its Social Policy Research Centre. Peter Martin,

Maire Dwyer and Peter Carr review the conference, taking a distinctively New Zealand perspective on it.

Primary health organisations are aimed at improving access to health care, and the risks and potential of this new policy approach are discussed by Ross Barnett and Pauline Barnett. Focusing on the sexual health of young people, Sue Jackson describes the findings of a study aimed at identifying New Zealand's research needs in this area.

Mervyl McPherson uses demographic analysis of successive cohorts to examine their different circumstances with respect to the availability of extended family support, state support and economic status. She discusses the implications for social policy for addressing the particular vulnerabilities of each cohort. *Rewarding Service* by Neill Atkinson describes the vulnerabilities of successive cohorts of public servants, in a history of the Government Superannuation Fund reviewed by Ann Reeves from a strictly interested civil servant's point of view.

Issue 21 is rounded out with a review by Peter Davis of a conference on international developments in the area of saving and sharing research data. He draws attention to some of the concerns identified by custodians of data sets in New Zealand. I invite you to enjoy this issue, and its wide range of stimulating papers.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'NP', with a long, sweeping flourish extending upwards and to the right.

Nicholas Pole
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