

## ***FOREWORD***

Issue 28 has a very strong focus on children, covering issues of care and protection, benefit support and education. In particular, we are very pleased to include in this issue several papers based on presentations to the 10th Australasian Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect (ACCAN), held in Wellington, and hosted by the Ministry of Social Development, the Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, and the Children's Commissioner.

Three papers are the work of international authorities on child protection, based on their keynote addresses to ACCAN. Their ideas work well together, looking to a way forward from their different perspectives. Canadian Joan Durrant's paper presents the Swedish model of child protection, shown as both preventive in its orientation and effective in its outcomes. Sue Gordon, a magistrate in the Children's Court, provides an Aboriginal perspective on child abuse, and outlines a range of Australian initiatives addressing child abuse, particularly with respect to indigenous communities. Robbie Gilligan speaks to the individual level of humane social work practice and illustrates his points with "therapeutic tales", Irish poetry and drama.

James Mansell focuses on the problem of surging notifications to the New Zealand child protection agency. Using the tools of systems thinking, his research paper on this serious instability identifies drivers that are central to a child protection dilemma facing many countries. In a companion paper that he describes as a "thought piece", James Mansell suggests a way toward stability in child protection systems. Eileen Munro of the London School of Economics responds to his proposals, and the author replies, opening a very useful debate.

Willem Adema, from the OECD's Social Policy Division, explores the way New Zealand public policy supports families in their linked aims to participate in the labour market and provide for their children. He identifies some of the issues and challenges for policy in this area, and his proposals focus on early-years care and education.

Part of the Ministry of Social Development's ongoing research programme into living standards in New Zealand was the Living Standards of Older New Zealanders survey. Patrick Barrett and Stephen Twitchin, with Sharon Kletchko and Faye Ryan, re-analyse the data from that survey to identify a subgroup of particular policy interest: older people who live in the community and who become frail. Their paper provides a profile of this vulnerable group of people.

Tony Hughes and Peter Saxton explore the utility of census data, particularly geographic micro-clustering data, to help develop useful sampling frames for research with gay men. They also discuss the issue of including a question on sexual orientation in the national census.

Early Start is a home visitation service based in Christchurch that is designed to support families as they address a range of parenting-related issues. David Fergusson, Hildegard Grant, L. John Horwood and Elizabeth M. Ridder discuss their evaluation of clients' satisfaction with Early Start.

Issue 28 closes with a review article by Bob Stephens on the topic of poverty. Bob Stephens reviews two books, *Poverty* by Ruth Lister, and *The Poverty Wars* by Peter Saunders. His paper contextualises the books in terms of recent developments in poverty research and policy work (both in New Zealand and overseas) and in terms of their authors' life work, and assesses these books' contributions. His review article provides a thought-provoking conclusion to a volume of papers that I hope will stimulate and challenge you.



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