

FOREWORD

I take pleasure in welcoming you to Issue 31 of the *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*. I also wish to welcome the members of our new International Advisory Board, who will bring their experience and expertise to supporting the future development of the journal. We look forward to further raising the standard of the journal, drawing on the Advisory Board for strategic direction and guidance.

We devote this issue to the third Social Policy, Research and Evaluation (SPRE) Conference, “Investing in Social Success”, convened by the Ministry of Social Development in April of this year. Holly Sutherland’s keynote address at the SPRE Conference forms the basis for her paper here on reducing child poverty. This has been an important topic for many past journal issues, and her focus on the sustainability of poverty reduction, drawing on the UK experience and the international literature, is particularly relevant to New Zealand’s policy direction.

The third SPRE conference incorporated the innovation of “Connections Sessions” targeted at senior officials from across social sector government and non-government agencies to discuss the New Zealand policy agenda. The papers by Karen Baehler and Eileen Munro, included in this issue, are based on Connections presentations.

Karen Baehler’s paper explores the challenges of social and political sustainability for New Zealand, drawing on Alexis de Tocqueville’s analysis of the essential threats to egalitarian democracy. She finds the French aristocrat’s observations of 19th century America to be a useful jumping-off point to look for essentially New Zealand solutions to these common problems.

Eileen Munro addresses the UK government’s policy of “Every Child Matters” and specifically criticises the current processes for information-sharing among professionals for the purpose of monitoring and screening children for targeted services. She identifies the limitations of the system’s programme logic, the shortcomings of the system itself and pitfalls of implementation.

At the SPRE conference, two contributions were singled out for special praise. Sophie Goldingay’s report on her qualitative research with young women in New Zealand prisons received the TNS Award for Effective Research for presentations based on primary research. Her paper in this issue focuses on one of the themes that emerged from this study, the motherly and mentoring relationships that developed between some older women inmates and the young women that participated in her project.

The judging panel also awarded special acknowledgement to a presentation not based on primary research, a study by Sylvia Dixon and Sarah Crichton of employment outcomes of people who left a social welfare benefit to go into employment. They analysed a comprehensive national database of taxable income payments, which permitted longitudinal linking of records and allowed them to study patterns of transitions between employment states, onto and off benefits, and between employers, and to relate these to income and employment-retention outcomes.

Two papers based on conference presentations address ecological issues, albeit in very different arenas. Philip Morrison explores how much your happiness depends on the city you live in. He has taken subjective measures of happiness, satisfaction and quality of life from survey data for 12 New Zealand places, controlled for the factors that we know tend to influence our feelings of wellbeing (health, age etc.), and identified that there is a distinct contribution made by the place where we live.

The paper by Ralph Chapman and Jonathan Boston addresses issues surrounding the problem of catastrophic global warming. They explore two questions: what would we have to do to quickly and dramatically reduce our production of greenhouse gases, and what would the impact of these actions be on our society? They discuss the social policy issues that arise on both these fronts.

Samson Tse's large-scale qualitative study of family violence in several Asian migrant communities in Auckland fills an important research gap. His interviews with women experiencing family violence, some perpetrators of violence and service providers, shed light on the social, cultural and economic contexts of family violence for his participants.

Household Labour Force Survey data is used in a contribution from the Ministry of Education – by Bhaskaran Nair, Warren Smart and Roger Smyth – to explore the impact of tertiary education on human capital (measured by earnings). They identify how much one's field of study, level of study and qualifications influence income as well as health and lifestyle outcomes.

Ann Pomeroy, in her paper on the Funding for Outcomes project, explains how this new approach to funding holistic services has changed the culture of contracting between government and service providers. The new system allows several government funders to be specified on a single contract instead of several contracts for various parts of

what is meant to be a wraparound service. The contracts focus on rewarding outcomes for clients instead of provider effort and (among other effects) have the immediate benefit of reducing compliance costs for the providers.

Issue 31 covers a broad range of the themes presented at the SPRE conference. Other papers based on SPRE presentations will undoubtedly appear, as they are developed, in future issues of the journal. In the meanwhile, I think you will find much to stimulate and enjoy right here.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Don Gray', with a stylized, cursive script.

Don Gray
Deputy Chief Executive
Social Development Policy and Knowledge