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A focus on statistics

Users of statistics had the opportunity to discuss their needs and ideas on the Official Statistics System, and to have a say in the development of New Zealand's official statistics, at the recent Key Statistics 2005 conference.

In addition, attendees had the opportunity to hear about the latest official statistics developments and future trends.

The conference, convened by the Government Statistician and held 25–27 October at Te Papa in Wellington, is a five-yearly meeting of users of official statistics.

More than 550 people attended the conference and the data integration seminar held the previous day. Attendees came from across government, universities, other educational institutions, community organisations, research and other sectors, as well as associations and organisations from all sectors of New Zealand.

Keynote speakers included Bill McLennan, the former head of the Australian Bureau of Statistics, who spoke on international trends in Statistics; Reserve Bank Governor Dr Alan Bollard; and Retirement Commissioner Diana Crossan, who showed how statistical data has been used in the Sorted campaign.

The conference also provided an opportunity for Statistics New Zealand to hold special statistics workshops for policy analysts, NGOs, teachers and children to raise awareness and understanding of statistics. Ten specialist workshops were held for users to discuss how they used statistics, how statistics were meeting their needs, and improvements they would like to see. These workshops, along with other sessions at *Key Statistics 2005*, enabled Statistics New Zealand to draw together an overview of users' views on official statistics.

The views and opinions gathered at the conference, as well as those collected in the lead up to the conference, will be used as part of a report that will be published in early 2006.



Broadcaster Linda Clark, who spoke at the conference from a user's perspective on the topic of "Tell us what you mean - Statistics, the media and the public".

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Conference presentations can be found at www.keystatsconf.co.nz/programme.html

Keeping pace with e-research

New Zealand is keeping pace with the rapid international developments in building virtual research communities in the social sciences.

Professors David Thorns and Paul Spoonley presented a paper at the first international e-social science conference, held in Manchester, England in June 2005, on New Zealand's development of access grids for the BRCSS Network (Building Research Capability in Social Sciences).

The new technology will allow BRCSS to create a national network linking all the BRCSS partners, providing high-speed access to multiple sites at once. "It allows for 'many to many' teleconferencing, compared with the older 'one-to-one' teleconferencing," David said. "It is embracing new technologies to strengthen the way the network can work." He said there was similar rapid progress internationally, with 60 sites now in universities in the United Kingdom, and up to 200 planned or running globally. "Access grids were first used in 1999 in the United States, so the growth has taken place in a short period of time."

David said the conference provided valuable insights into how the technology was used elsewhere, thus showing how to maximise its use in New Zealand. "There were three main strands to the conference. The first was about the technological innovations that support collaborative research, such as access grids, sharing and transfer of files and data, and interactive online activity. For example, how a group working collectively on the same project can see each other and work together in real time."

The second stream related to how new technologies shaped the way people carried out the practice of social research.

"This is about the practice of working together in virtual research communities and networks across the country – how does that change how you do the research? Developments include online researching and web-based design, new ways of sharing and using existing data sets, and collaborative online working. Such changes will also require new strategies for data storing and retrieval."



David Thorns

The third stream related to ethical and access issues. "The issues arising from e-social science research include, for example, issues such as how to make data anonymous, and how to protect people's privacy."

David said the conference host, the National Centre for e-Social Science, was a leader in e-social science research. The conference provided the opportunity to make valuable links with the centre. "It was certainly useful. We need to stay globally connected and be aware of developments in other places."

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One-stop shop for official statistics

Researchers, policy analysts and university students are among those who will benefit from the 'one-stop shop' access to official statistics available through the new portal 'Statisphere'. Managed by Statistics New Zealand, Statisphere is being developed progressively to provide access to statistics by subject and by agency, taking the researcher directly to the appropriate place on the relevant government agency site. The 'by subject' search provides an extensive list of subjects in alphabetical order, while the 'by agency' search covers about 40 government departments. The links identify the statistical information, reports and surveys completed or in progress within individual agencies. There is also

information about official statistics, including what falls into the definition of official statistics and what they provide, as well as a set of key statistics, the official statistics system seminar series, a glossary, and a training and development directory. Lyall Payne, Project Manager for the Official Statistics Programme, said the portal would make official statistics from across government more accessible. "It will allow anyone to find what they want without having to trawl through individual agency sites." Agencies will post statistical information on the site over the next few months. The site, www.statisphere.govt.nz, was officially launched at the *Key Statistics 2005* conference in October.

Working towards a definition of 'Asian'

The use of the term 'Asian' in social policy R&E was the focus of a workshop in Auckland earlier this year.

The workshop was co-hosted by the Centre for Asian Health Research and Evaluation (University of Auckland), the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research (Victoria University of Wellington) and the Centre for Asian and Migrant Health Research (Auckland University of Technology), and supported by SPEaR.

It brought together researchers, community leaders, senior staff from community organisations, and representatives from government departments with the goal of getting a working definition for the term 'Asian'. This included discussion on the contexts in which it would be appropriate to use the term to gain access to resources and opportunities.

The workshop also raised awareness of the limitations of using 'Asian' as an umbrella term to represent a diverse group of people from many cultures and often with few, or no, similarities: "In effect, there is a need to clarify potential ambiguity and confusion from the use of such an umbrella term in the allocation of resources and services to subgroups," one of the hosts, Dr Samson Tse, said.

Participants discussed how 'Asian' was a social category rather than an ethnicity, and was a term sometimes imposed from the outside. From a policy perspective, it provided a political voice for lobbying and developing research services to a specific group of people. However, the diversity of ethnicities grouped under the term 'Asian' made it difficult for government agencies to set priorities and devise a coherent set of policies. "Health statistics, for example, are beginning to show a skewed picture masking serious issues," Samson said.

Ministry of Social Development representative, Angelique Praat, said the workshop clearly situated the current New Zealand-specific usage of 'Asian' in political, statistical and conceptual terms. "It led to a thoughtful discussion of the implications of the usage – in research, in the community and in political contexts. As well as identifying the problems with using 'Asian'

as a descriptive and sometimes explanatory concept, the workshop moved to strategies for unpackaging the term 'Asian' to enable sensible application – for example, collecting other sorts of information such as religion and socio-economic status, and length of time in New Zealand," she said.

"Workshops on the day facilitated interesting debates around what our 'ethnicity' data actually captured, including whether ethnicity is a matter of ascription or self-identification, the shifting and relational notion of 'identity' and the place of 'Asian' and other groups in multicultural, bicultural and monocultural political paradigms," Angelique said.

Samson said feedback from participants showed they found the workshop valuable, and they appreciated the platform the workshop provided for sharing views and meeting people relevant to their projects.

"It is time to have a better understanding of the term 'Asian' as this umbrella term cannot address the complexities adequately," he said.

"Delays in defining the term 'Asian' will continue to mask disparities and deprivation in social development and health, making 'Asians' invisible at the level of targeted services and resource allocation."

Samson said the next step would be to circulate a discussion paper on the issues covered in the workshop to government departments, non-governmental organisations, and community groups.



'Asian' is an umbrella term that masks diversity.

It is time to have a better understanding of the term 'Asian' as this umbrella term cannot address the complexities adequately.

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Chair's comment



Forging and implementing high-level strategies is an art in any operating context, not least where the imperative is to manage for better social outcomes, says SPEaR's chair, Professor Richard Bedford.

As the demands increase for both evidence-informed policy advice and the evaluation of interventions to aid good decision making, the challenges of delivering coherent and timely research and evaluation continue to grow.

Being strategic about future investments is therefore of critical importance if we are to maximise on opportunities for the social sciences to contribute to the knowledge base, and to the policy settings and frameworks that will foster better social outcomes.

To this end, forming a strategic relationship between SPEaR, with its focus on government sector progress, and BRCSS, with its focus on building research capability in the social sciences in the university sector, is good for the overall development of the social sciences in New Zealand.

Recently I have taken over the role of Director of BRCSS and I see several key areas where there is real potential for SPEaR and BRCSS to work together.

Both SPEaR and BRCSS operate as networks linking major components of the social research and evaluation sector. They both have mandates to leverage opportunities to make innovative contributions to the knowledge base, enhance the quality of research practice, and utilise new technologies for improved connectivity. SPEaR has been very effective in 'joining up' social research and evaluation in government departments in ways that ensure there are significant developments in capability and good practice.

BRCSS is in the final stages of building the first major cross-institution advanced video conferencing facility (BRCSS Grid) using access grid technology, to take advantage of the advanced network and second-generation internet for research collaboration, data sharing, and teaching.

Both SPEaR and BRCSS have some resources to support

research by postgraduate students and emerging researchers; both are involved in examining data saving and sharing opportunities; both are working actively to strengthen the research-policy nexus in ways that preserve the intellectual integrity of the practice of research while serving the interests of the policy community.

Recommendations by the Social Science Reference Group in its report "Coming of Age: Social Science

Research and its Contribution to Wealth and Wellbeing in New Zealand, 2006-2016" highlight ways we can grow the value from these coordination and capacity-building investments in the government and university sectors.

At the end of the day we want to see a vibrant and relevant social science sector delivering high quality research and adding value into the policy arena in the interests of social development in New Zealand and elsewhere.

As I discovered recently while participating in a roundtable (sponsored by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research

Council and the International Metropolis Conference in Toronto), we have gone further in New Zealand than in most countries in establishing a framework within which it should be possible to mediate the tension emerging between policy-relevant research and scholarly advances in knowledge that have no policy relevance.

SPEaR and BRCSS are networking initiatives that have great potential for contributing to finding the best path to policy relevance and intellectual freedom in a society that increasingly expects to see tangible returns for the investment of public funds in social research. Let's make sure we make the most of our opportunities.

At the end of the day, we want to see a vibrant and relevant social science sector delivering high-quality research and adding value into the policy arena in the interests of social development in New Zealand and elsewhere.

Any comments or feedback, email info@spear.govt.nz

Extending the Social Report

Regional and local authority indicators have been included in the Social Report for the first time, extending its reputation as a world-leading model.

The indicators were taken from the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) *Social Report 2005*, which uses 42 indicators to monitor trends across 10 domains, and which together provide a picture of the overall wellbeing and quality of life in New Zealand. These indicators were then disaggregated to regional council and territorial local authority level where possible.

"We ended up getting 19 of 42 indicators to regional council level and we got 11 indicators for the majority of the territorial authorities (TA). We were able to use an extra five for the 12 big cities, so they have 16 indicators at the TA reporting level," said Jill Bowman, Principal Analyst with MSD's Strategic Social Policy group.

The information is published on the Social Report website and uses colour-coded maps to compare regions by indicator. Regions are shaded from dark green for those doing best in any particular indicator through to dark red for the lowest performing region for the indicator. "For some indicators, there's not a great difference between highest and lowest. For others, even if the range of outcomes is relatively wide, New Zealand may still be doing well overall. The unemployment rate might be higher in some regions compared to other regions, for example, but New Zealand is doing well by international comparisons."

Jill said the web format has been a successful way of presenting the regional data, and people are now requesting the information in hard-copy format. "People are finding it really useful."

The Local Government Act 2002 requires regional and local authorities to monitor community outcomes, and Jill said the social indicators would assist them in this by providing a benchmark for measuring progress over time. "We've presented data for one year only so far and have used the most recent we could get. But there is a possibility of developing a time series retrospectively and into the future, because it has been so well received."

She said the process had been a learning experience for everyone involved. "We now have a better understanding of the data available and its limitations. For the regions, we had to use census data a lot. At a national level, while we can use survey data, the samples are too small to be disaggregated to regions



Jill Bowman and Jeff Sheerin

and the sample error rate would be too high to be able to use this data with confidence."

The publication of the *Social Report 2005* in July marked the end point of a comprehensive round of consultation with other government agencies to see if indicators are still appropriate and to confirm what data will be available.

MSD's Jeff Sheerin, Team Manager, Social Monitoring and Reporting, Centre for Social Research and Evaluation, said that Social Report indicators have to meet strict criteria, such as being statistically robust and replicable. He said there was a lot of information behind each indicator which has to be distilled down to a measure that gives a sense of how well we are doing. "It is a very rigorous process of double-checking and quality assurance."

Jeff said the social indicators were also dynamic. "They can change over time to reflect new information, or different ways of collecting and analysing information. For example, the paid work indicator domain now uses median, rather than average, hourly earnings. That's because a median, or the middle point of the income distribution, gives a better reflection of whether people are becoming better or worse off over time. If an average is used, a small group of very high income earners can skew the average, for example," Jeff said.

Another change this year was the deletion of an

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Review of ageing research

Research on ageing is important in providing an evidence base for policies that affect the wellbeing of older people today and future generations.

To improve research in this area, the government has commissioned Professor Chris Cunningham, Professor of Māori Health at Massey University (Wellington), to provide an independent view of the future of the sector.

Chris said it was about more than just research on older people. "The baby boomers drive a lot of New Zealand social policy. But it is important to look at other populations – Māori, Pasifika, Asian, new immigrants. So it is about ageing not just as gerontology, but as a social phenomenon."

The report will look at how to improve coordination, address capacity issues, identify immediate research needs, and ensure current and future data needs are met. It will be looking at how to improve collaboration and encourage a multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to ageing research and policy development, how to make better use of existing research on ageing, and how to disseminate information about current and future research projects better.

"I'll be identifying the types of research needed and marrying those with our research capacity, and seeing if we can get some coordination, and ways to see what other people are doing, as the area tends to be fragmented," Chris said.

"On the positive side, there is quite a lot of data available that is not being used. The public sector has significant sets of data; for example, there is a large database on superannuitants in the welfare system. So data does exist, but it may not be being accessed. There



Chris Cunningham

are also other researchers around the country with data that others may not even know about."

The review will look at how to encourage researchers to enter and remain in ageing-related fields, including ways to support people in mid-career to transfer to the area, and to encourage students into graduate study on ageing. It will also look at ways to ensure New Zealand researchers are actively involved in international research.

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Extending the Social Report

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indicator of 'disability requiring assistance'. This was included in previous reports as a proxy measure of non-fatal health outcomes. The information is already captured, however, under the 'health expectancy' indicator, which is a combined measure of fatal and non-fatal health outcomes. The change also fits with the New Zealand Disability Strategy, which encourages a focus on the societal barriers faced by people, rather than the impairment itself.

For more information, go to
www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/

Report wins award

The Social Report won recognition in this year's BearingPoint Innovation Awards with a highly commended in Innovation and Management category. BearingPoint, working in partnership with the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand, aims to recognise public sector innovation with the awards. The Social Report award recognises the inclusion on the website of regional indicators, providing for the first time a consistent picture of how wellbeing in New Zealand varies from region to region. The Social Report is at www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/

OECD report highlights the importance of evaluation

An evaluation of New Zealand's labour market initiatives has been singled out by the OECD as a factor in the success of the policies.

The report highlights the WRK4U and Jobs Jolt initiatives, introduced in 2003, as effective activation programmes. It says the 'can-do' philosophy of Work and Income had an increasingly positive influence on work placements and unemployment rates, and the decline in unemployment accelerated with the introduction of a package of activation programmes in 2003.

The report goes on to say that an improvement in the volume and accuracy of evaluations was an important background factor for the implementation of effective policies. WRK4U was an example where the evaluation was able to provide good information on its effectiveness in a very short time frame.

WRK4U is a 30-minute seminar that people applying for the unemployment benefit can voluntarily attend before making a formal application for the benefit. The seminar covers a person's rights and obligations when receiving the unemployment benefit. Participants also receive an information pack to make a benefit application. After the seminar, the client can set up a case manager interview (urgent cases are seen that day) or apply later.

Marc de Boer, Ministry of Social Development Principal Analyst, said WRK4U was piloted in three Auckland sites (Onehunga, Avondale and Manukau) between March and August 2003. The evaluation showed WRK4U produced a substantial reduction in the number of people who chose to apply for the unemployment benefit (26% reduction in applications and 20% reduction in grants).



Marc de Boer

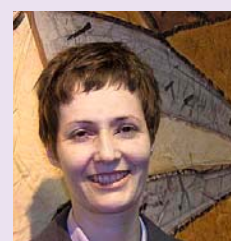
In addition, WRK4U took less case manager time to administer than the existing case management process. "Based on this knowledge of 'what works', WRK4U was rolled out nationally in August 2003. The national roll-out saw a sharp drop in the number of people moving on to the unemployment benefit, indicating the seminar was successful as a national programme," Marc said.

The evaluation was an "opportunistic" evaluation. "We were not involved in setting up the pilot, but we were able to compare the pilot sites to non-pilot sites in Auckland to see what difference the seminar made to people's decision to apply for benefit."

People in R&E

Tracy Anderson has recently taken up the position of operations manager for SPEaR. Her job involves looking after the SPEaR website and the Linkages programme. Before taking her new position, Tracy worked on contract to the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), working on the establishment of the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse

(NZFVC). She will continue to have a role with NZFVC partners, including maintaining the Clearinghouse library, which is hosted by MSD.



Mapping shows R&E trends

Data from SPEaR's mapping project is revealing the underlying patterns in the social R&E effort.

SPEaR has been mapping government-funded social policy R&E for three years now. It shows that SPEaR's member agencies employ 300 to 500 full-time equivalent research and evaluation staff, depending on who and what is counted. Further, these agencies contract around \$30 million of social R&E.

SPEaR's Principal Analyst, Raewyn Good, says the data show where the focus of the research effort lies. The information also assists in identifying gaps within the government sector and provides a base for comparing activity across the wider social R&E sector.

For example, the data shows that the majority of the social agency R&E focus, in terms of population groups, is on children and young people. "While there are sound operational reasons for this, we can also tell that there is very little activity about older people and inter-generational aspects. The data then enable us to consider whether there needs to be new work undertaken, in view of our ageing population," Raewyn says.

She says the mapping information makes a significant contribution to the knowledge base SPEaR utilises as part of its function to oversee the government investment in social policy R&E.

The Key Knowledge Themes and Key Knowledge Questions form an important part of the mapping

framework. In terms of the themes, the most dominant area for activity is 'Enhancing Social Outcomes', followed by 'Human Capability', in which the number of projects increased significantly in 2003/04. The data reveal little activity on the theme of 'Social and Cultural Identities', but this theme has some coverage in other parts of the R&E sector.

In terms of the key questions, 'Analysing what works to change variation in social outcomes, including the design, delivery and impact of policy' continues to dominate, with activity increasing in each of the past three years.

Despite a small increase in 2003/04, R&E activity related to future-focused research remains low, and Raewyn notes the same pattern in other parts of the R&E sector.

She says a trend to longer projects and coordinated programmes is beginning to emerge, which is a likely reflection of policy directions arising from the 'Review of the Centre' (State Services Commission) and 'Managing for Outcomes' (SSC, Treasury) and the work of SPEaR.

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FRST investment in social R&E

From 1 July 2007, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) will be investing approximately \$3m a year in new research focused on social outcomes in New Zealand, in its Building an Inclusive Society portfolio.

The Foundation is in the process of deciding what research to invest in. A draft of the Investment Signals to be used for the process is now available on the FRST website.

The Building an Inclusive Society portfolio has three target outcomes:

- **Children and Young People Participating and Succeeding:** All children and young people have the opportunity to participate, to succeed and to

make contributions that benefit themselves and others.

- **Participation in Employment:** All New Zealanders have the opportunity to participate in quality, sustainable and productive employment.
- **Positive Ageing:** All New Zealanders are able to age positively, are highly valued and are recognised as an integral part of families and communities.

The Foundation will be calling for proposals for research that contributes to one or more of these target outcomes. It will invest in projects of \$200,000 to \$750,000 p.a. for two to five years.

Visit www.frst.govt.nz for further details.

Knowledge transfer: Methods taken up

Postgraduate research funded by the SPEaR Linkages programme is informing social policy research, as the following case shows.

From 2003, doctoral student Iris Hutchinson at the School of Government (Victoria University of Wellington) received a SPEaR Linkages postgraduate scholarship to support her research on Q-methodology – a methodology that combines qualitative and quantitative research techniques to reveal people's views and assumptions in order to deepen understanding of the issues.

"Q-methodology is useful in social policy research because it provides a way of understanding complex policy situations and enabling multiple points of view to be taken into account. It avoids many of the problems with conventional consultation mechanisms and provides an efficient way of working with a diverse range of views," Iris says.

As a result of Iris's work, Q-methodology was taken up by the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) Defining Community Needs project, which aimed to provide a range of views about how the terms 'community' and 'need' were understood by representatives from the community and across government. It used the Q-methodology approach for four separate studies of community representatives and staff from MSD, the Department of Labour and the Department of Internal Affairs.

The findings pointed to strong contrasts between the views of community representatives and the cross-government perspective, suggesting that current policies do not capture the operational or functional aspects of 'community'. Through the use of Q-methodology, the project has emphasised the importance of understanding a range of views, and how these views could be used to form and inform a relevant policy position.

A second project to use Q-methodology is the Ageing in Place project. MSD's Centre for Social Research and Evaluation's Older and Working Age People Research and Evaluation unit is exploring the relationship between older people, working-age people, communities and 'ageing in place'. 'Ageing in place' is defined as an older person's ability to make choices about where to live, and to receive the support needed



Iris Hutchinson

to do so. Many older people see remaining in their own home as a key component of this.

Whereas previous studies have identified the costs and implications of informal care of older people, few studies have focused in detail on the perspectives and viewpoints of the working-age and older family members in relation to the obligations, responsibilities, rewards, opportunities and costs of a range of 'caring scenarios'. This study aims to address this gap, and uses a multi-method approach that incorporates Q-methodology.

"This is a nice example of how local leading-edge research that is connected to international thinking can translate directly into improving Government approaches to important issues. The ingredients for successful uptake in this case were a combination of high-quality scholarship and good relationships between academics and government-based researchers. Both parties need to be proactive and innovative," notes SPEaR Project Manager Paul Honeybone.

For more information, contact info@spear.govt.nz

Good practice in contracting

Contracting practice forms an important part of the good practice guideline programme SPEaR is developing.

The first stage of development included workshops and the identification of underpinning principles. These principles have then been applied to four initial areas and the draft material workshopped further. Areas drafted to date are: contracting, ethics, R&E involving Māori and R&E involving Pasifika.

SPEaR Principal Analyst Raewyn Good says that the draft guidelines should be seen as evolving documents. "People can go to the SPEaR website and use them, send us feedback, contribute examples, raise issues and be a part of this process. Currently, the drafts are in Word format with footnotes. In 2006, we will be transferring the draft material to PDF so that examples and reference documents will be more readily accessible. We really want people to contribute examples.

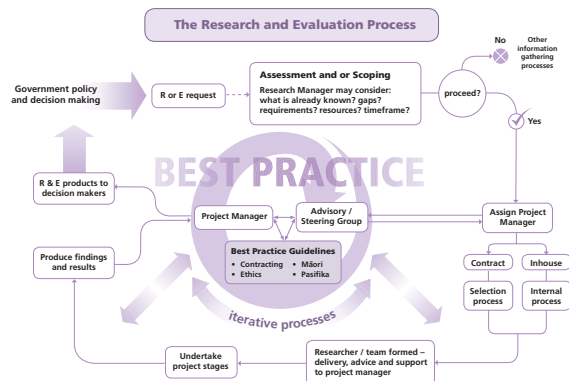
"With the contracting section, we looked at the drivers and processes within contracting agencies and developed a system diagram (see right) that takes people through the various stages in a project life cycle. Applying the principles, we then developed draft wording for the stages and steps and began collecting real examples to illustrate the guidance," Raewyn says.

The good practice programme is a contribution to building capacity and capability in the sector. Experience was showing a number of points in the R&E life cycle where practice could be improved.

"For example, people usually agree that before deciding to commission some research work, it is wise to do some investigation about what is already known – but what is often not shared is where to look, who to ask, and what to look for. A lot of effort can be put into duplicating or partially duplicating information that is already known to others in the sector, because the people asking, or those being asked, either don't know the range of places to find out what exists, or do not have the time to access the various sources or to assess its utility."

Raewyn says this can lead to a series of one-off small-scale projects, with short deadlines, instead of building programmes of knowledge. The result can be repeated cycles of work that do not build on previous learning.

"One of the ways we can work smarter is to think about using administrative data more, to find out what other agencies have done, to use skilled librarians



and records people to help develop key words for publication searches and filing database queries and widen the time horizons and locations looked in," Raewyn says.

"We have also noticed there is a tendency for parts of the sector to discount research published more than three to five years ago. Sometimes this is wise as the policy or legal framework has significantly altered. But a lot of human behaviour patterns change much more slowly and, depending on the issue, work that was done well 20 or 40 years ago may still be relevant, and minor updating could be a sensible option."

Raewyn says that if after working through such aspects and issues it is decided the research is still needed, the next decision is whether the work can be done in-house or externally, and to assign a project manager. "That can often be when timing aspects become really important. There isn't a large pool of potential contractors sitting waiting for work and in-house people's work programmes are often set well in advance. A further complication arises in that policy cycles and associated budgets tend to be annual but the R&E cycle isn't.

"Once a decision to contract has been made, the guidelines can assist people through the process including consultation, progress reporting, applying intellectual property rights equitably, ensuring the findings are presented so others are able to access and use the information, and keeping an eye on that use after the project may seem to have finished."

For more information, go to www.spear.govt.nz or email info@spear.govt.nz or raewyn.good002@msd.govt.nz

Research on protection orders

The Ministry of Women's Affairs (MWA) has commissioned a study to find out more about women's experiences of protection orders.

The research, being undertaken by a team of researchers based at the University of Waikato, aims to describe women's experiences of obtaining protection orders, the impact of protection orders and the response to breaches of the orders.

The researchers will identify those aspects of protection orders that are working well and areas for improvement – including barriers that prevent women from applying for and obtaining protection orders in the first place. "Protection orders, issued by the Family Court under the Domestic Violence Act 1995, are a key protection for women at risk from domestic violence so improving the effectiveness of protection orders is likely to improve the safety of women," Policy Analyst Margaret Young said.

The researchers will undertake 44 case studies of a diverse group of women based on interviews supplemented, if possible, by documentation such as affidavits and interviews with case informants such

as the women's lawyers. Other components of the research include a literature review, analysis of case law and analysis of statistical information. Discussions with key people in the domestic violence field will also be undertaken.

The research team has asked domestic violence practitioners around the country to nominate women to participate in the research. They will be talking to a variety of women who have experienced violence, including those with and those without protection orders.

The researchers will also be asking people working in the area of family violence to contribute their views on the accessibility and effectiveness of protection orders. The project is expected to be completed in the second half of 2006.

For more information, contact Margaret Young at young@mwa.govt.nz

Social research methods summer courses

The New Zealand Social Statistics Network is running six short-courses in applied research methods in January–February 2006. The five-day courses are open to anyone interested in expanding or updating their knowledge in research methods and analysis. Courses will be held at the city campus of the University of Auckland.

Introduction to statistics. 31 January–4 February. An introductory course in statistical methods with emphasis on statistical techniques applicable to the social sciences, focusing on concepts rather than mathematical theory

Using mixed methods in research and programme evaluation. 7–11 February. An introductory-level course for current and emerging researchers who want to know more about using both qualitative and quantitative methods in their research activities.

Data analysis in SPSS. 7–11 February. This course provides the beginner in quantitative data analysis with the basic requirements for analysis in an SPSS computing environment. It focuses on the analysis

of survey, administrative and/or census data for analysis.

Introduction to NVivo: computer-assisted qualitative data analysis. 7–11 February. An introductory hands-on course for those familiar with qualitative research approaches who are interested in using NVivo to assist with the tasks of qualitative data analysis.

Qualitative research techniques. 13–17 February. An introductory course of lectures and practical workshops for those with no background in research or no previous experience with qualitative techniques of data collection and analysis.

Data analysis in R. 13–17 February. An intermediate-level course for those seeking to learn how to use the R package to analyse and present data. The focus is hands-on experience in using standard R commands rather than programming.

For more information, go to www.arts.auckland.ac.nz/departments/index.cfm?P=8778 or contact nzssncourses@auckland.ac.nz

The needs of prison inmates

A lack of evidence on the needs of young women offenders has prompted a Canterbury University tutor and former prison social worker to undertake her own research on the needs of this population group.

Sophie Goldingay has been a practitioner for 11 years, and six of these were working for the Corrections Department as a social worker and team leader for Southern Regional Prisons. She currently works as a



Sophie Goldingay

tutor for Canterbury University's School of Social Work, and provides clinical supervision and consultancy services for organisations and individual practitioners.

She has recently been awarded a SPEaR Linkages postgraduate scholarship to support her research for a Master of Arts in Social Work. Her research title is "Separation, Segregation or

Mixing: Housing Issues for Young Female Offenders in New Zealand Prisons".

Sophie is looking at whether young female offenders – those aged between 14 and 19 years – need separate accommodation from their adult counterparts while serving a prison sentence. She is also examining whether the present young female inmate population feel their social, cultural and safety needs are being met by the current accommodation arrangements.

"The female prison population is one of the least understood populations," Sophie says.

"There is a body of opinion that says the needs of young women offenders are not being met by housing them in a mixed-age prison environment, and that they are bullied and 'contaminated' by the older women.

"There have also been assumptions that older women will 'mother' the younger ones. But there is no evidence supporting either view – there is minimal research on young female offenders. No-one has asked the question as to whether it suits their needs to be with adults – there are no studies that look specifically at the effects of age-mixing on this group.

"The reality can be different from what appears to be the case, and I'll be asking the young women themselves as to what they see as meeting their needs."

Sophie says that 'needs' is a "slippery word" so she will also be looking at needs as variously defined by the professionals in the field. Her research is not so much to find answers as to "open up a framework to start considering the issues".

For more information, contact
sophie.goldingay@canterbury.ac.nz

Web access to education data

A new website, Education Counts, has been set up to provide easy access to information about education statistics and research.

The site, established by the Ministry of Education, provides a wide range of information, including: statistical information such as data on achievement, participation and resourcing; demographic information tailored for use in the education sector; reference lists including addresses of New Zealand's schools and other educational institutions; and information on key education indicators.

It also provides access to publications, including research and evaluation reports, Iterative Best Evidence Synthesis, regular monitoring reports and specialised analysis.

Ministry of Education Senior Manager David Lambie, responsible for Data Management and Analysis, says although much of the information was already on the web, it was difficult for people to reach it unless they knew specifically what they were looking for.

"Now, we have provided a site on the education sector portal, edCentre, which is specifically structured so people can easily find information on education statistics and research. Although it has only been 'live' since November, already we've had a lot of positive feedback," David says.

To access the site, go to www.educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/

Pacific women's wellbeing

Pacific peoples have become a highly visible and important feature of New Zealand's social landscape. This has seen the need for more informed data on the issues and priorities of Pacific peoples increase significantly over the past two decades.

Economic wellbeing, in particular, was identified as a major concern for Pacific women at a Ministry of Women's Affairs' (MWA) consultation meeting in 2001. As a result, MWA secured funding from the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology (through the Cross Departmental Research Pool) to lead a project entitled *Improving Pacific Women's Economic Well-being*. The project presents a unique opportunity to hear the voices of Pacific women and gain some valuable insights into their issues and priorities.

The project included a qualitative research study, undertaken by Koloto and Associates, looking at the different factors that may affect Pacific women's economic well-being. Focus groups and individual interviews were held with 230 Pacific women from six centres across the country. The results of the qualitative research, along with earlier work on the overall trends for Pacific women across a range of socio-economic indicators, are intended to inform policy development by government agencies that impact on Pacific women and their families, and for use by Pacific peoples and the general public.

One of the highlights of the research is the sense of satisfaction women got from participating in the study. Many of the participants remarked that their involvement in the study was the first time that they reflected on their roles and the contributions they make to their immediate/extended families, church and communities in New Zealand, as well as the Pacific Nations.



The Pacific Women's Economic Well-being Reference Group, members of the research team from Koloto and Associates Ltd and staff from the Ministries of Pacific Island Affairs, Health and Women's Affairs. Back row from left: Emosi Koloto, Halahingano Rohorua, Christina Atoa Tapu, 'Ana Koloto, Esther Cowley-Malcolm, Theresa Fabricius, Front row from left: Tae Tu'inukuafe, Marisa Taituave, Ena Polima, Iva Singsam, Sonya Rimene.

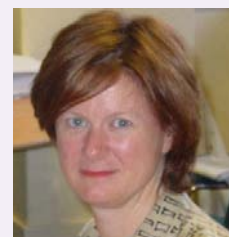
The research report is expected to be released in early 2006.

For more information, contact Huia Haeata at haeata@mwa.govt.nz

People in R&E

Anne Jackson has been appointed Senior Manager, Tertiary Education Outcomes and Strategy at the Ministry of Education. Anne, who was formerly General Manager of the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation at the Ministry of Social Development, took up her new position in October 2005, and she is responsible for establishing the strategic directions for the tertiary sector. Anne says the role involves working closely with other agencies such as the Tertiary Education Commission and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority to promote links between

strategic direction, funding and quality assurance. As well, she is working with agencies such as the Ministries of Economic Development, Research Science and Technology, and Social Development about the contribution tertiary education makes to the country's wider social and economic goals.



Study on future housing needs

The future of home ownership and the role of the private rental market in Auckland is the subject of research to be commissioned by the Centre for Housing Research, Aotearoa New Zealand (CHRANZ).

CHRANZ manager Terrence Aschoff said the research will build on the *Housing Tenure Aspirations and Attainment* research commissioned by CHRANZ and published in July 2005. It will include an analysis of future home ownership by ethnicity (Māori, Pacific and new settlers) and income (low to moderate) in Auckland, and look at the role of the private rental market in meeting the housing demands of those for whom owner occupation is not an option financially.

Other new research being funded by CHRANZ in the 2005/06 financial year includes research on:

- affordable housing in the Bay of Plenty region, which will investigate the links between housing, work and educational opportunities across the Bay of Plenty region. The research findings will be used to design and present a range of options aimed at alleviating any identified mismatches and arising stresses
- accessible housing for the future ageing and disabled population in New Zealand, which will look at supply and demand for accessible housing for New Zealanders with a physical disability, generate projections of future need for accessible housing, and consider the policy implications
- the impact on housing energy efficiency of market prices, incentives and regulatory requirements, which will analyse regulatory and market-based instruments to encourage house-owners (owner occupiers and landlords) to build new, or retro-fit existing, houses to make them more energy efficient. CHRANZ is now calling for tenders for this research. Applications close on 30 January 2006
- Pacific Island housing experiences, which aims to better understand the particular housing experiences and aspirations of Pacific Island communities, and identify emerging trends, issues and solutions to current and future housing problems
- housing and economic adjustment in New Zealand, which aims to: explain movements in house prices across territorial local authorities as a function of demographic and economic drivers; link housing supply responses to price and other determinants of supply; indicate near-term house supply responses; and identify any significant regional variations. This research by MOTU Economic and Public

Policy Research is due for publication in February 2006.

CHRANZ is managing three other research projects, to be published next year:

- The Future of Housing in New Zealand
- Affordable Housing in Nelson, Marlborough and Tasman
- Māori Housing Experiences.



*Terrence Aschoff
CHRANZ manager*

For more information, contact
Terrence.Aschoff@chranz.co.nz

Housing tenure

The *Housing Tenure Aspirations and Attainment* research was conducted by DTZ New Zealand, UMR Research, Dr Philip Morrison of Victoria University of Wellington, and Davies Associates. It includes research on: home ownership aspirations and attainment; changes in the patterns of home ownership and rentals in New Zealand since the early 1990s; and projections for household demand across New Zealand and by region to 2016.

It shows that New Zealanders' aspirations to own their own homes remain high, although home ownership rates are to continue to fall from 68% of households in 2001 to 61.8% by 2016. While the actual number of households owning is increasing, the growth in the number of households renting is growing faster.

It also shows a projected strong growth in demand for both owned and rented accommodation, particularly in the Auckland region and upper half of the North Island, which the report says will require significant government and non-government capital. The number of households headed by persons aged 65 years and over is also expected to increase.

The full report, *Housing Tenure Aspirations and Attainment*, and a summary are available on www.chranz.co.nz

International education studies: How do we compare?

Data for a major comparative international study of reading literacy are now being collected by the Ministry of Education.

The data is for the second cycle of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), a project designed to help countries monitor changes in their children's reading literacy achievement. The first cycle was conducted in 35 countries, including New Zealand, during 2001.

The study is administered every five years, and involves administering a reading assessment at the fourth grade (Year 5 in New Zealand), as well as collecting extensive background information from students' parents, their reading teachers, and school principals and policy makers.

"The assessment is being administered towards the end of the school year so the southern hemisphere countries – New Zealand, South Africa and Singapore – are administering PIRLS in schools now," says New Zealand's national research coordinator of PIRLS, Megan Chamberlain. The northern hemisphere countries collect their data towards the end of their school year in April and May next year.

"In New Zealand, we have a bigger sample this year than in 2001, involving about 6,500 Year 5 students.

"The assessment is being administered in te reo Māori and English, as in 2001. To be assessed using the Māori version, students need to have received at least 80% of their instruction in te reo Māori, preferably for at least four years," Megan says.

PIRLS is one of a number of international education studies managed by the Ministry of Education's Comparative Education Research Unit.

Others include the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), and the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey (ALL).

For more information on the PIRLS project, including results from the 2001 study, go to www.minedu.govt.nz/index.cfm?layout=document&documentid=10630&data=1 The international PIRLS website is www.pirls.org

The Ministry has recently published a summary of key findings for New Zealand in comparative education studies, *International education studies: How do we compare?* For a copy, contact research@minedu.govt.nz

Committee provides statistics advice

An independent committee, the Advisory Committee on Official Statistics (ACOS), was established in July to provide the Minister of Statistics and government with advice on official statistics. The committee was established to make sure the collection and provision of statistics keeps pace with the continuing changes in society and the economy.

The committee is chaired by David Caygill, a former Minister of Finance and recent Chair of the Accident Compensation Commission. In addition, there are nine committee members: Professor Richard Bedford (Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research, Waikato University); Dr Peter Bushnell (Deputy Secretary to the Treasury); Dr Bryan Jenkins (Chief Executive,

Environment Canterbury); Marcel Lauzière (Deputy Chief Executive, Ministry of Social Development); Jas McKenzie (former Secretary of Labour); Phil O'Reilly (Chief Executive, Business New Zealand); Roger Proctor (Group Manager, Ministry of Economic Development); Emeritus Professor Alastair Scott (Department of Statistics, Auckland University); Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Joint Director, Ngā Pae o te Maramatanga, the National Institute of Research Excellence in Māori Development and Advancement, hosted by the University of Auckland). The Government Statistician, Brian Pink, is an ex-officio member.

For more information, go to www.statisphere.govt.nz

SPEaR Linkages awards 2005

Awards for Linkages rounds 6, 7 and 8 are:

Research Methods Workshops

Using Mixed Methods in Research and Programme Evaluation workshop, 13–17 February 2006, to be hosted by and held at the University of Auckland.

Provide Greater Understanding of What Works in Terms of Research Practice and Utilisation for Social Work workshop, to be run two-monthly from December 2005 to February 2007, venues to be confirmed, hosted by Massey University, Auckland.

Motu Policy Seminar Series, to be held monthly, venues to be confirmed, hosted by Motu: Economic and Public Policy Trust, Wellington.

Key Statistics – Unlocking New Zealand's Potential, 25–27 October 2005, at Te Papa, and hosted by Statistics New Zealand, Wellington.

New Zealand Definition of 'Asian', 29 July 2005, hosted by the School of Population Health, Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, University of Auckland, Tamaki Campus.

Pacific Health Research Fono, 9–10 June 2005, held in Auckland and hosted by the Health Research Council, Wellington.

Towards 2020: Challenges for the Social Science Community, 26 May 2005, hosted by the Royal Society of New Zealand, Wellington.

Issues in Cross-cultural Research: Introduction to Multi-dimensional Scaling (MDS) Analyses for Cross-cultural Research, 30–31 March 2005, held at Victoria University of Wellington and hosted by the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Psychology, Victoria University of Wellington.

Postgraduate Scholarships

Separation, Segregation or Mixing: Housing Issues for Young Female Offenders in New Zealand, Sophie Goldingay, Masters scholarship grantee, University of Canterbury.

An Evaluation of Four Community Service Organisations in Tai Tokerau (Northland), Christine Darkin, PhD scholarship grantee, Auckland University of Technology.

Visiting Speaker Awards

Social Simulation – A New Technique for Social Research and Social Policy Development, 21 February 2006 at the University of Auckland and 24 February 2006 at Statistics New Zealand, hosting

visiting speaker, Professor Nigel Gilbert, from the University of Surrey.

Reconciling Work and Family: An International Policy Perspective, 20–21 April 2006. Victoria University of Wellington. Hosting visiting speaker, Janet Gornick, from City University of New York.

Achieving Social Outcomes: Design, Delivery and Impact of Policy, 18 November–5 December 2005, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University, Palmerston North, hosting visiting speaker, Marilyn Taylor, from the University of the West of England, Bristol, United Kingdom.

Seminar Series 13–18 April 2005, Motu: Economic and Public Policy Research Trust, hosting visiting speaker, Professor Shelly Lundberg, from the University of Washington.

Social Policy Research Awards

A comparison on kinship care and foster care outcomes, a three-month research project by Philippa Wells, hosted by Department of Child, Youth and Family Services, Wellington.

When the Going Gets Tough: What Happens to Worn-out Workers? A twelve-month research project by Hazel Armstrong and Rob Laurs, hosted by the School of Social and Cultural Studies, Massey University Albany.

An Assessment of the Importance of Population Size for Primary Health Care Organisations, visiting speaker Judith Smith, University of Birmingham, in New Zealand from 12 February to 18 March 2005, hosted by the Health Services Research Centre, Wellington.

People in R&E

Sue Walker has recently moved to the HSC (Health Sponsorship Council) to manage its Research and Evaluation Unit. The HSC markets important health messages to New Zealanders, currently via four health brands – Smokefree, Auahi Kore, SunSmart and Bike Wise. The six-strong Research and Evaluation Unit provides the evidence base for existing and new programmes and evaluates their effectiveness. Sue's position is a new one and underlines the central role of research and evaluation in the HSC's work. Sue was previously manager of Research and Evaluation Services at the Department of Internal Affairs.

