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Developing a culture of R&E

The Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) is strengthening the use of research and evaluation in its decision making and policy advice.

MYD's Principal Analyst for Research and Evaluation, Joan Sykora, says the Ministry's work is guided by the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa* (YDSA), which includes the "good information" principle of gathering and sharing of effective research, evaluation and information.

"The strategic management team at MYD has made the commitment to actively and intentionally incorporate the youth development knowledge base into decision making in our daily work," Joan says.

"This means that as a ministry we stay on top of current and credible R&E, and make it accessible to the broader youth sector."

Joan says the "good information" principle is the last of six YDSA principles to be implemented, starting in late 2005 with scoping ways the principle could be implemented and resulting in the MYD Strategy for Research and Evaluation.

The strategy calls for MYD to be an "organisation of enquiry, supporting exploration, discovery and effective use of the youth development knowledge base" and states that the organisation will "advance that knowledge base as credible, accessible, relevant and integrated into decision making that supports young New Zealanders".

To achieve this, MYD works in partnership with the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation (CSRE) at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). Joan describes her role as that of "conduit" linking data and good decision making – translating evaluation efforts, research, journals and international literature on youth development for MYD and the youth



Joan Sykora

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Chair's comment



SPEaR's chair, Professor Richard Bedford, reflects on the importance of the forthcoming Social Policy, Research and Evaluation Conference.

In 2001, the government commissioned the Improving the Knowledge Base (IKB) project. In addition to the contributions of SPEaR and the Programme of Official Social Statistics (POSS), an important element of the IKB project was the biennial Social Policy, Research and Evaluation (SPRE) Conference, convened by the Ministry of Social Development.

The SPRE Conference offers us a unique opportunity to participate in a focused and interactive forum involving policy makers, researchers and evaluators, and non-governmental social service agencies, and has become the largest social policy conference in Australasia.

The third SPRE Conference will take place from 3 to 5 April 2007 in Wellington, on the theme of "investing in social success". I encourage you to attend. This major international conference provides a platform for discussion and debate about the key social policy opportunities and challenges New Zealand faces into the future. It also presents a rare chance to connect policy, research and practice in an engaging and stimulating environment.

The SPRE Conference 2007 is organised around four key sub-themes:

- social investment – ensuring effective, fair and sustainable social outcomes for New Zealanders
- social dynamics – how New Zealand values and cultures will change over time
- enduring social challenges – New Zealand families now and into the future.

- the global context for social policy – the opportunities and challenges we face as New Zealanders in a changing world

Three internationally regarded keynote speakers will lead the discussion. Professor Holly Sutherland (Institute for Social and Economic Research, Essex, UK) is a microsimulation modelling expert specialising in the distributional effects of social policies, gender effects of re-distribution policies, and child poverty measurement and analysis.

Professor Keith Banting's (School of Policy Studies and the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University, Ontario, Canada) research interests primarily focus on public and social policy in Canada and other Western nations.

Professor Joakim Palme's expertise relates to social policy in a comparative perspective, including research related to social insurance and health, as well as on social policy reform. Joakim is the Director of the Institute for Futures Studies in Stockholm, Sweden.

The question of how to best invest in social success is one we must grapple with in the coming years. Researchers, evaluators and practitioners all play key roles in providing a robust evidence base to underpin social policy advice to government.

The SPRE conference series is an important component of the IKB project, and plays a major role in the development of networks across the sector. I hope to see you there.

For information on conference registrations, see p. 6.

Developing a culture of R&E

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sector. "My work involves education, technical support, organisational capacity building, building the knowledge base and providing advice on credible, timely use of R&E."

Joan says that one of the challenges is helping people understand the role of R&E in the operations of a public sector ministry, and how it can improve decision making, services, policy advice and the engagement of young people. "We intend to use our website as a tool for sharing the youth development knowledge base with the broader sector.

"The transfer of knowledge, both from within and outside the organisation, is a vital component of an organisation of enquiry. This is more likely to happen in an environment of teamwork and co-operation where group problem solving takes place and the development of innovative ideas is encouraged."

In addition to the MYD Strategy for Research and Evaluation, a research action plan was created as a result of the work by the 65 participants at the youth development research forum in June. Joan presented the action plan to the SPEaR Committee in October.



Migrant experiences

The Families Commission has recently published two studies, funded under its Blue Skies programme, on the experiences of migrants – one on migrant women who become new mothers and the other on Korean migrant families in Christchurch.

The first report, *New Spaces and Possibilities: the Adjustment to Parenthood for New Migrant Mothers* says migrant women who become new mothers in New Zealand find their cultural needs are often not met or understood by health professionals. The researchers interviewed 40 Chinese, Korean, South African, British, American, Indian, Palestinian and Iraqi women about their experience of pregnancy and birth in New Zealand.

Report author Ruth DeSouza of AUT University's Centre for Asian and Migrant Health Research says many of these women felt that they had poor communication with health professionals and that their need for support and information was not always met. There was also sometimes a lack of understanding about their cultural needs.

She has made a range of recommendations as a result of the study. These include making improvements to support services and communication, providing translations of relevant information, and more training in understanding cultural needs.

In the second study, *Korean Migrant Families in Christchurch: Expectations and Experiences*, Korean

migrants told Canterbury University researchers they found it hard to get to know Kiwis, they felt rejected, and almost all had experienced some kind of harassment.

The researchers, Suzana Chang, Carolyn Morris and Richard Vokes, interviewed 36 migrants who arrived here between one and 23 years ago. They found that many of the migrants had come to New Zealand for their children's sake. "They wanted them to have access to good education, less school stress and they wanted the family to have a better life and future," says Carolyn. Once in New Zealand, while most enjoyed the more relaxed lifestyle, they said that they found few work opportunities outside of the Korean community, partly due to a lack of English skills, but also in some cases because of discrimination. The migrants also said they experienced harassment in their daily lives.

The researchers suggest strengthening local and national social and institutional support for new migrants. This could include seminars on their civil and legal rights in relation to harassment and racist abuse.

The full reports are available on www.nzfamilies.org.nz/



SPEaR website launched

In November, SPEaR launched its next generation website. The SPEaR website is a "virtual community" of social policy researchers and evaluators. The aim is to provide a focused and interactive forum for social policy researchers and evaluators across the sector. The website allows us to support research and evaluation into new areas, and encourages researchers, evaluators, and providers to co-ordinate and publicise their work. Check us out at www.spear.govt.nz or email info@spear.govt.nz

Blue Skies latest allocations



Studies focusing on the young, old, rural communities and Māori feature in the Families Commission's latest Blue Skies funding round.

This fund allocates a total of \$100,000 each year for work on topical family issues. Researchers are granted up to \$15,000 per study and new studies are approved in April and September each year. Five studies were approved in the September 2006 round, from just over 40 applications. The studies are:

- **A feasibility study of the family partnership model in the New Zealand context.** Associate Professor Annette Huntington and Helen Wilson, School of Health Sciences, Massey University, Wellington. This is a feasibility study to assess the support and willingness of various family support agencies across the sector to provide the British-developed Family Partnership Model training module for their front-line workers. The model provides for integration of front-line services, including police, within a tiered system of mental health service delivery.
- **Strengthening rural families: An exploration of industry transformation, community and social capital.** Colin Goodrich and Kaylene Sampson, School of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Canterbury. The researchers will look at rural communities and families to explore shared social capital, in particular the degree to which social networks, civic participation, voluntary engagements and various other formal and informal arrangements contribute to the wellbeing of rural families. The analysis will include looking at how rural families have balanced paid work, family and community commitments in the context of local industry change.
- **Family life and support in older age.** Mary Breheny and Christine Stephens, School of Psychology, Massey University, Palmerston North. The aim of this project is to talk to a range of people over 60 to find out how they experience family life, including their view of the contributions they make and the support they are given by their families.
- **Life lines: Young New Zealanders imagine family, friends and intimacy across their life course.** Dr Lesley Patterson, Dr Robin Peace and Christy Parker, School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University. The researchers will ask 90 Year 13 secondary students to write about how they imagine their futures to be, with a particular emphasis on family, friends and intimate relationships. The results will be analysed to find out how young people are making sense of the changing nature of contemporary social life, including their relationship ideals and the importance they place on their family and other relationships.
- **Whānau/family socialisation through everyday talk.** Associate Professor Huia Tomlins-Jahnke and Professor Arohia Durie, Te Uru Maraurau School of Māori and Multicultural Studies in Education, Massey University. This study is a test of a new way of carrying out research, using adult members of a family to record family conversations. The tape recordings will be analysed by the whānau and researcher together and the process videotaped. The information gathered through the interviews will be used to improve understanding of how whānau conversations contribute to whānau identity.

All completed Blue Skies reports are available on www.nzfamilies.org.nz/

New UNESCO National Commission chair

Former Governor-General of New Zealand, Dame Silvia Cartwright, has been appointed as chair of the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO. UNESCO is a United Nations organisation that promotes co-operative action between 194 member states in the fields of education, science, culture and social science. The New Zealand commission provides a leadership role within the South Pacific region – including in education and world heritage – and plays an important role in the

organisation's work worldwide. Dame Silvia replaces Hon Margaret Austin who has held the position of Commission Chair since 1999. Dame Silvia joins the five elected specialist members – Laurence Zwimpfer (communications), Andrew Matthews (science), Alison Broad (education), Rosemary Du Plessis (social science) and Keri Kaa (culture). Her appointment is for a three-year term starting immediately.

Māori housing trends

New research has found that most Māori have a strong desire to own their homes even though current rates of homeownership are low and declining.

The research, by the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit and Massey University's Research Centre for Māori Health and Development, looked at Māori housing experiences and aspirations to identify emerging trends and issues.

The research was jointly funded by the Centre for Housing Research, Aotearoa New Zealand and Te Puni Kōkiri.

The key findings include:

- Despite low, and declining, homeownership rates of less than 50%, most Māori have a strong desire to own their own homes.
- The main barriers to homeownership (especially for larger and younger Māori families) are low incomes, high debt levels, poor access to finance, high property prices and lack of information about homeownership.
- Māori householders and renters are generally positive about their housing experiences but face particular challenges in rural and urban areas,

including housing supply, quality, pricing, and variation in landlord practices.

- Māori housing preferences and experiences must be understood in terms of Māori cultural practices, the importance of proximity to whānau and whānau land and lineage-based shared property rights. Proximity to whānau is crucial in preferred house location with Māori households often accepting substandard housing as a result.
- Housing policy responses have been inconsistent and unco-ordinated between delivery agencies. Some current policies have been positive for Māori, others are still being assessed. Consequently, the gap between Māori housing realities and aspirations continues to widen.

The authors recommend building on existing housing policies to develop new initiatives to overcome barriers to improving Māori housing circumstances.

Copies of the research report are available at www.chranz.co.nz, or contact terrence.aschoff@chranz.co.nz

Housing research programme

The Centre for Housing Research, Aotearoa New Zealand's (CHRANZ) 2006–07 housing research programme includes the following new investments.

Affordable housing: The community housing sector in New Zealand. This research will critically assess the current and potential contribution of the community housing sector towards addressing housing affordability problems being experienced in New Zealand.

Affordable housing: Local government in New Zealand. This research will critically assess the current and potential contribution of local government towards addressing housing affordability (rental and homeownership) problems being experienced in New Zealand.

Northland and Canterbury regions: Issues and scoping paper. This research will provide a critical assessment of the Northland and Canterbury regions and recommend how best to apply CHRANZ's

affordable housing, employment (labour market) and regional development research programme to the realities of the regions, to deliver solutions-based research.

Register of housing research. This research will identify publicly funded housing research being undertaken by or for the Government, to be developed into a register of housing research.

Census 2006 and housing in New Zealand. This research will use Census 2006 housing-related data to assess the key results of selected studies from CHRANZ's completed housing research.

Children and young persons' housing experiences: Issues and scoping paper. This research will identify relevant policy issues and the available research evidence base and data sources on the connections between children and young persons' social and economic outcomes and their housing circumstances.

Linkages funding reaches the \$1m mark

In October 2006, SPEaR reached an important milestone – the Linkages funding programme allocated its one millionth dollar.

Since 2003, 73 people have received financial support over 11 rounds of funding.

The Linkages programme aims to build knowledge for informing the development of social policy and improving the evaluation of social policy outcomes.

It also sponsors initiatives to improve social policy research capability, including agency research practice.

“The Linkages programme provides funding for opportunities aimed at strengthening the links between social policy agencies and the academic community,”

says Hannah Pashby, SPEaR Project Advisor responsible for the Linkages programme.

“We offer awards for social policy research scholarships, fellowships and exchanges, and workshops and seminars that are aimed to improve the capacity of researchers to deliver policy-relevant research now and into the future.”

The Linkages programme has three funding rounds each year – May, August and November.

For more information, and to apply, go to www.spear.govt.nz or email info@spear.govt.nz



Hannah Pashby

Register now for SPRE Conference 2007

Online registrations are now being accepted for the Social Policy, Research and Evaluation (SPRE) Conference 2007: Connecting Hearts, Minds and Lives.

The SPRE Conference 2007 will be held in Wellington from 3 to 5 April 2007, and the theme is “Investing in social success”.

This major international conference has renowned speakers leading the discussion – Professor Holly Sutherland, Institute for Social and Economic Research, Essex, UK; Professor Keith Banting, School of Policy Studies and the Department of Political Studies, Queen’s University, Ontario, Canada; and Professor Joakim Palme, Director of the Institute for Futures Studies, Stockholm, Sweden.

At the SPRE Conference 2007, you will be able to:

- learn about new approaches to social investment and innovative solutions to social problems
- connect with leading social development

researchers, evaluators, practitioners and academics from New Zealand and overseas

- engage with stakeholders and users of social policy research and evaluation
- stimulate discussion and debate on social issues.

Full conference registrations – prior to 16 February 2007 – are \$565 per person (incl GST). Late registrations (after 16 February 2007) will be \$675 per person (incl GST).

A limited number of subsidised places are available for postgraduate students, delegates from non-government organisations and community workers.

Subsidised registration fees for the SPRE Conference 2007 will be \$170.00 per person.

For registration and subsidy applications go to www.msd.govt.nz/social-policy-conference or contact conference manager Arna Wahl Davies at arna@conference.co.nz

Whole-of-government annual gender stocktake

A whole-of-government annual gender stocktake of statutory bodies found women made up 41 percent of Ministerial appointees as of December 2005.

The results were collected and released by the Nominations Service of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which is responsible for supporting the achievement of a government-endorsed goal of achieving gender balance on government statutory bodies by the year 2010.

For the purposes of the stocktake, 'statutory bodies' were defined as government bodies that have Ministerial appointments made through the Cabinet Appointments and Honours Committee. As at December 2005, 410 statutory bodies had a total of 2683 ministerial appointees, of which 1098 were women.

"Before we introduced the stocktake, there was no way of reliably assessing progress towards our 2010 goal," nominations adviser Sean Molloy said. "We can now measure our progress, but more importantly the stocktake is a powerful driver for achieving change in women's representation in public sector governance."

Detailed results have been sent to the Chief Executives and Ministers responsible for the 27 agencies that administer appointments in the public sector, so that agencies and Ministers can assess the gender balance on the bodies they are responsible for.

Agencies working in sectors with a traditionally high proportion of women's involvement such as the

health, social development, and community sectors, have the highest representation of women.

The 41 percent figure has drawn comparison with the private sector, where women made up 7.13 percent of the top 100 boards on the New Zealand Stock Exchange (*New Zealand Census of Women's Participation 2006*, released by the Human Rights Commission and the New Zealand Centre for Women and Leadership).

The Service does not see the 41 percent figure as a reason for complacency however. "We suspect that the 9 percent remaining may be the hardest to crack," says Sean, "We're now trying to particularly increase women's representation in sectors where they've been traditionally under-represented."

The stocktake is a major exercise for the team of three staff at the Nominations Service. The data needs to be collected, entered, and checked. The results are then checked with the 27 different agencies, involving contact with around 50 different analysts.



Sean Molloy

People in R&E

Beverley-Ann Hong has recently taken up a permanent position (four days a week) as a Principal Research Analyst with the Research and Evaluation Team of the Workforce Policy Group in the Department of Labour. Bev began her research career in the late 80s working in the Department of Justice and later for the Department for Courts and New Zealand Immigration Service. In the late 90s she worked as an independent contractor and was involved in a range of social policy-related research services. These have included managing the Child, Youth and Community research team at the Ministry of Social Development; evaluating the community magistrates pilot; measuring and understanding living

standards; developing strategies for improving the knowledge base for social policy; and research about the *Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa*. Bev's key research focus at the Department of Labour is on international migration, settlement and employment-related issues.

