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New chair for SPEaR Committee

Professor Richard Bedford, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at Waikato University, has been appointed chair of SPEaR.

Richard takes over from the inaugural chair, Dr Arthur Grimes, and says he is looking forward to the challenge.

“There are huge gains possible from improving coordination of the knowledge base. The more collaborative headway we can make as researchers and evaluators, the more research and evaluation can be used by decision makers and impact on the key issues New Zealand faces.”

Richard said that, as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) at the University of Waikato, he had seen the benefits of coordinated approaches to inter-disciplinary research programmes.

“I believe the same opportunities for improvements through collaboration exist for Government agency programmes.

“I am excited by the opportunity to independently chair SPEaR to assist with brokering progress in social policy research and evaluation.”

Richard brings a wealth of experience to the position. He has a PhD in human geography from the Australian National University, and is a specialist in migration studies. Between 2001 and 2003, he was academic adviser to the Ministerial Advisory Group on Immigration.

As well as his research administration position, he is Professor of Geography at Waikato, and has won several major research grants. These include funding from the Marsden Fund, the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology and Environment Bay of Plenty’s Smart Growth Project. He has also held international research contracts and consultancies, and is an experienced supervisor of postgraduate student research.

Richard has published extensively, and he was elected to a Fellowship of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 2000, in recognition of his research on population movement in the Asia-Pacific region.

He also has extensive experience in committee work in the social sciences and public policy areas.



Richard Bedford

Building research capability

An \$8 million programme for Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences (BRCSS) has been awarded by the Tertiary Education Commission to a network of senior researchers.

Associate Education Minister Steve Maharey announced this month that funding for the BRCSS programme had gone to the Aotearoa New Zealand Social Sciences Research Network. The network comprises researchers from the universities of Massey, Auckland, Victoria, Canterbury, Lincoln and Waikato, along with researchers from the Family Centre in Lower Hutt. The network is coordinated by Massey University.

"New Zealand has enormous research talent in the social sciences but hasn't been able to build up an effective capacity that adds up to more than the sum of its parts. This project will make a huge difference in building that capacity and delivering benefits for the country," the Minister said.

The initiative brings together 36 existing medium-term strategic research projects to extend them into new areas based on the themes of: new wealth creation and distribution systems; social justice and development; transmission of wealth and knowledge in a context of demographic change; and sustainability of diverse households, communities and settlements.

Network Director, Professor Paul Spoonley, said the project would help new and emerging researchers



Members of the Aotearoa New Zealand Social Sciences Research Network with Associate Education Minister Steve Maharey. From left: Professor Richard Bedford, Professor David Thorus, Professor Jacques Poot, Dr Jenny Neale, Dr Charles Waldergrave, Associate Professor Robin Kearns, the Minister, Professor Paul Spoonley and Professor Sally Casswell

develop their skills, as well as encourage new research. "This initiative represents a unique opportunity for the New Zealand social science community to contribute to the future wellbeing of all New Zealanders."

SPRE conference on 'What Works?'

The second Social Policy, Research and Evaluation Conference is being held on 25 and 26 November 2004, at the Wellington Convention Centre.

"This is a 'not-to-be missed' opportunity to hear from leading social policy researchers and evaluators in New Zealand and around the world. The theme of the conference is 'What Works?' This is a fundamental question for both policy and practice. The conference will bring together the policy, provider, research and evaluation communities and emphasise evidence-based policy and practice," organising committee member Raewyn Good said.

Keynote speakers are a mix of international and New Zealand speakers. They include Raymond Torres, Head of the Employment Analysis and Policy Division of the OECD; Johan Mackenbach, Professor of Public Health and Chair of the Public Health

Department, University of Erasmus, The Netherlands; Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director, First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada; Carey Oppenheim, Senior Policy Advisor, Prime Minister's Policy Directorate, UK; Len Cook, National Statistician, UK; Mason Durie, Head of School, Te Putahi-a-Toi, School of Maori Studies, Massey University; Helen Roberts, Professor of Child Health, City University, London. There will also be a Pasifika keynote speaker.

Raewyn said people who wanted to attend the conference would be wise to register as early as possible, given the overwhelming response to last year's conference, which saw long waiting lists develop and some people missing out.

For more information, <http://www.msd.govt.nz/social-policy-conference>

Analysing longitudinal data

Presentations by British academic Professor Stephen Jenkins have helped boost New Zealand's capability in analysing longitudinal data.

Stephen, from the Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) at the University of Essex, was in New Zealand in June and July on a visit funded by a SPEaR Linkages Visiting Speaker Award and hosted by research institute MOTU. He spoke on longitudinal data analysis at a number of seminars, workshops and meetings organised by MOTU, Statistics New Zealand, the Ministry of Social Development, and Victoria University, strengthening the linkages within the academic, policy and research communities.

MOTU senior fellow Dave Maré said the visit was timely as it followed the release of the first set of results from Statistics New Zealand's SoFIE survey, a longitudinal survey which, as more results came on-stream over the years, would provide insight into the dynamics of how people's lives unfold.

"Stephen's visit reinforced the value of those data sources. His visit will help build capability here for analysing longitudinal data and gaining social policy insights, so we can get the best out of the information from SoFIE. To get the most out of longitudinal data, researchers need to develop skills and use special statistical tools that are different from those used in analysing cross-sectional surveys. One workshop, held at Victoria University of Wellington,

focused on helping researchers gain some of these skills, and to understand the strengths and problems of longitudinal research. Other workshops, attended by academics and public sector and independent researchers, provided hands-on experience in using statistical software," Dave said.

"One of the challenges in analysing longitudinal data is allowing for the fact that people are different in their life trajectories or in their responses to change.

Understanding these differences is crucial for policy

analysis, and is not possible without longitudinal data. Longitudinal data helps you to understand what is really going on behind the trends in social outcomes that we monitor."

Richard Arnold, organiser of the Victoria University workshop, also emphasised the importance of building capability in longitudinal data analysis.

"By tracking the same set of individuals over time, longitudinal surveys can detect the effects on a person's life of a significant event, such as becoming unemployed or retraining. These effects on income or health, for example, may only become apparent some time later in the person's life, and cannot be seen in repeated cross-sectional surveys, where a new sample of respondents is selected each time the survey is run," Richard said.

"Longitudinal data helps you to understand what is really going on behind the trends in social outcomes that we monitor."

New look website

The SPEaR website has gone live with a new look and new functionality. It includes new online forms for people in the sector to submit information about their publications, news and events. A powerful search function will soon be available for researchers to use in accessing information. A laptop display will be available at the Social Policy, Research and Evaluation conference in November for delegates to try out the new functions. Go to www.spear.govt.nz or email info@spear.govt.nz if you have queries.



Avoiding the poverty trap

Greater targeting of Family Assistance on the number and ages of children in families, rather than on hours of work or income, may help families avoid the poverty trap, research by Linkages-funded PhD student Patrick Nolan suggests.

The work is part of Patrick's evaluation of the design of family and employment tax credits, and is the first comprehensive evaluation since 1992 of the poverty traps in the social security system in New Zealand.

"Reforms to family and employment tax credits have been at the heart of social security reforms throughout the Anglo-American world. In New Zealand, reform to the Family Assistance Tax Credits is a central feature of the Working for Families reforms, which will collectively account for an additional \$1.1 billion of new expenditure in the social security system when fully implemented in 2007-2008," Patrick says.

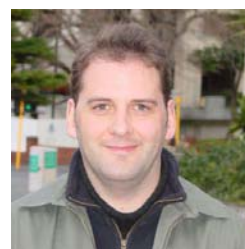
"I'm focusing on how the shift in New Zealand's social security system since the mid-1980s towards tax credits targeted on the basis of income and work effort has had an impact on a number of public policy outcomes. These include financial incentives to work; the incidence of poverty; spillover to people with higher incomes; administration and compliance costs; and fiscal costs to the government.

"I'm also looking at whether the impact of these programmes on public policy outcomes would improve if there were changes to the bases for the targeting of these programmes. In particular, I'm looking at whether greater targeting based on the number and ages of children in the household – as opposed to hours of work or income – would have a positive effect on public policy outcomes.

"Increasingly targeting supplementary assistance on the ages and numbers of children could allow simplification of the social security system and reduce the extent that families face the withdrawal of assistance when their incomes increase. These bases for targeting may also be a relatively accurate proxy for need, as families with children face additional costs to families without children and family incomes tend to be relatively low in the years when they are bringing up young children."

Patrick says a key finding of his research is that single-income low-wage families with children (with both sole and partnered caregivers) are the family types most likely to face poverty traps in the social security system. "Poverty traps occur when people receive little

or no increase in income in the hand when they increase their hours of work. These poverty traps have implications for a wide range of policy issues, including the labour supply of primary and secondary earners, the demand for childcare assistance, and the formation and stability of family structures."



Patrick Nolan

Although reforms to family and employment tax credits have been central to social security reforms throughout the Anglo-American world, there has been relatively little comparative public policy research on these reforms.

"My study compares the experiences with these programmes in five Anglo-American countries (New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States). Even after the Working for Families reforms, New Zealand emerges from this international comparison as an extreme version of targeting by income, with relatively little assistance provided for families not categorised as having low incomes," Patrick says.

For more information, contact Patrick.Nolan@vuw.ac.nz

Students build links

PhD students funded by the SPEaR Linkages programme met in Wellington recently to discuss their research and to develop links with social policy researchers. The students each gave a short presentation on their doctoral research, were briefed on the work of SPEaR and the Ministry of Social Development, and took part in a discussion on the evidence-informed policy context and their postgraduate experiences. SPEaR Project Manager Paul Honeybone said the day gave students a chance to talk about their research and provided them with an insight into the day-to-day business of those working in a public policy research environment.

Poster competition

Social research postgraduate students are invited to enter a poster competition, being held in conjunction with the forthcoming Social Policy, Research and Evaluation conference.

The objective of the conference is to improve the linkages between government advisers, social service providers and social policy researchers and evaluators, in order to support increased use of high-quality social research in policy development and the design of social services.

To enter the poster competition, students must be studying in a field related to social science and/or social policy, eg public policy, Maori studies, economics, sociology, psychology, human geography, planning, health, education or demographics.

Posters that meet the entry criteria will be accepted and displayed at the conference. "Shortlisted entrants will receive a complimentary conference registration. It's a really good opportunity for postgraduate students to come together with potential employers, and to find out about other research people are doing," organising committee member Raewyn Good said.

As well, the winners will receive a cash prize, donated by the Centre for Research, Evaluation and Social Assessment (CRESA), of \$1,500 for first prize and \$750 for second and third.

Entries close on 4 October. For information on entry criteria, go to www.msd.govt.nz/social-policy-conference

Data sharing group

A high-level working party has been set up to advance cross-sectoral and cross-agency research data sharing. The working party, facilitated by SPEaR, comprises representatives from government agencies including Statistics New Zealand, Inland Revenue, the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Social Development, as well as Professor Peter Davis (University of Auckland), Professor Paul Spoonley (Massey University) and Dr John Yeabsley from the Institute of Economic Research. For more information, contact info@spear.govt.nz

People in R&E

Geoff Bascand, formerly General Manager of the Labour Market Policy Group in the Department of Labour, joined Statistics New Zealand in July, in the new role of Deputy Government Statistician – Industry and Labour Statistics.



Geoff has an honours degree in geography from Otago University and a masters degree in economics from the Australian National University. He started his career at Treasury, working in economic and social policy branches, and then as Director of Macro-economic and Tax Forecasting. After two years with the IMF in Washington, Geoff joined the Department of Labour as General Manager of the Labour Market Policy Group.

Cathryn Ashley-Jones joins Statistics New Zealand this month as Deputy Government Statistician – Social and Population Statistics.



Cathryn has an honours degree in economics from Victoria University. Since early 2000, she has been at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, advising on the health sector and accident insurance issues, and, until she took up her new SNZ appointment, was Director of the Foreshore and Seabed Group. In 1994, she was Director of Policy, Sector Policy Branch, at the Ministry of Health. Prior to that, she worked at Treasury, BERL and NZIER.

Jo Garrett has joined the SPEaR team as project administrator on a full-time basis for one year. Jo has come from Te Papa where she worked as part of a small team focused on museum development, including website administration.



Before that, Jo spent a number of years in Dublin and London where she worked in a range of roles including visa officer for the New Zealand Immigration Service, editorial assistant for a weekly on-line music magazine and receptionist for a travel agency. She has a degree in sociology from Victoria University, and is happy to be back in Wellington where she grew up. Jo will administer the SPEaR website.

Housing research identifies challenges

Research into the housing needs of older people recommends a partnership approach to policy development and delivery that involves the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The research was commissioned by the Centre for Housing Research, Aotearoa New Zealand (CHRANZ) and carried out by the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing (NZiRA) and Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL). CHRANZ manager Terrence Aschoff said the research was intended to inform policy advisers and decision makers on broad strategic issues affecting older persons' housing.

The research analyses the housing situation of people aged 65 and over in New Zealand, including the types of accommodation that will best meet the needs of an ageing population and improve the quality of life for older people.

It says the key challenges are the need to maintain and upgrade mainstream housing (owner-occupied and rented) so that 'ageing in place' remains viable, and the need to develop a range of alternative housing options to meet special needs, whether these be care needs, social or cultural preferences.

It says 'ageing in place' is clearly a favoured approach in New Zealand government policy, and it is likely that the vast majority of older people in the future will be 'ageing in place' rather than in institutional care.

However, staying in a long-term family home may not be the best option in all circumstances, and specialised housing in the form of sheltered or extra-care housing, retirement villages or social villages will be part of the mix.

The report says it may be more economic to renovate existing housing than to build specialised housing for older people, to cope with the increased demand fuelled by population ageing.

It also says that partnerships between public, private and voluntary sector agencies "is a promising avenue to explore. This may avoid the 'silo' approach to policy development and delivery and help to co-ordinate activities."

CHRANZ has recently released three other research reports, *The Impact of Financial Circumstances and Tenure Choice* (BERL, June 2004); *Housing Costs and Affordable Housing* (DTZ Research, June 2004); and *Scoping Bi-Directional Impacts of Economic, Social, Environmental Changes and the NZ Housing Market* (Motu Economic and Public Policy Research, July 2004).

All the reports are available on the CHRANZ website at www.chranz.co.nz

Diary notes

Australasian Evaluation Society International Conference. *Diverse Voices in Evaluation*. Adelaide, Australia, 13–15 October 2004. E-mail aes2004@sapmea.asn.au or go to www.aes.asn.au

Inaugural *Asian Health Conference*, Auckland, 4–5 November 2004. Hosted by the Auckland University Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at the School of Population Health, Tamaki Campus. Go to www.asianhealth.auckland.ac.nz

Eleventh Conference on *Labour, Employment and Work*, Wellington, 22–23 November 2004. Go to www.spear.govt.nz/documents/events/call-for-papers-lew11.doc

The Second Social Policy Research and Evaluation Conference *What Works?* Wellington, 25–26 November 2004. Go to <http://www.msd.govt.nz/events/conferences/social-policy-04/index.html>

The *2004 SAA(NZ) Conference*. Hosted by the School of Social and Cultural Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 26–28 November 2004. Go to www.saanz.rsnz.org/conferencevw2004.html

IAOS satellite meeting on *Measuring Small and Indigenous Populations*, Wellington, 14–15 April 2005. Email ISIsatellite@stats.govt.nz

Symposium focuses on health inequalities

A recent symposium on health inequalities was an “overwhelming success,” says organising committee member Anna Matheson.

The one-day symposium, held in Wellington last month, was attended by about 285 people. Anna says it provided a forum for a broad inter-sectoral discussion of the health and social implications of policy developments and interventions aimed at reducing health inequalities.

“We had speakers from a range of disciplines and backgrounds presenting on a variety of issues related to health inequalities. The focus was on the relationship between evidence, knowledge, implementation and outcomes.”

The conference was divided into four sections. In the first section, Drs Papaarangi Reid, Deborah Ryan and Tony Blakely gave presentations on socio-economic and ethnic inequalities. In the second section, the speakers were David Slack, Susan St John and Associate-Professor Michael Belgrave. “These speakers were all from disciplines outside of the health sector, in order to expand the discussion about rights, needs and inequalities,” Anna says.

The third section looked at some of the frameworks that could be used to address inequalities.

“The speakers here were Drs Peter Crampon and Julia Carr and Associate-Professor Philippa Howden Chapman. The final section heard from those involved in the provision of services where efforts were being made to address health inequalities, and speakers included Olivia James from Otara Health, Dr Kathy James and others from the Newtown Union Health. Sir Paul Reeves chaired the day and Geoff Fougere provided a summing up.”

Anna says feedback from the conference has been extremely positive. “We are in the process of negotiating with publishers to have an edited book published based on the symposium. The organising committee is also meeting to discuss other ways in which we may build on the momentum and success of the day.”

The symposium was sponsored by SPEaR, the Health Research Council, Capital and Coast District Health Board, and the Wellington School of Medicine and Health Sciences, University of Otago.

Symposium proceedings will soon be available on www.spear.govt.nz

“The focus was on the relationship between evidence, knowledge, implementation and outcomes.”

Social policy history

A new book, *Past Judgement: Social Policy in New Zealand History*, brings together recent research on a range of social policy contexts. Edited by historians Bronwyn Dalley and Margaret Tennant, it also includes contributions from Michael Belgrave, Margaret McClure, Danny Keenan, Warwick Brunton, Derek Dow, Peter Lineham, Linda Bryder, Aroha Harris, Bronwyn Labrum, Merv Hancock and Gaynor White. The essays emphasise both change and continuity in social policy. Many have delved into historical materials, only to find echoes in contemporary debates. The book is published by the University of Otago Press.

Asian health

The University of Auckland’s Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences hosts its inaugural *International Asian Health Conference* on 4–5 November this year. Organised by the faculty’s Centre of Asian Health Research and Evaluation (CARE) at the School of Population Health (Tamaki campus), the conference will provide an opportunity to exchange and strengthen the knowledge base in Asian health issues for practitioners, researchers, policy makers and funders in government and private sectors. To register, go to <http://www.cce.auckland.ac.nz/conferences/index.cfm?P=6020>

The value of dialogue

Recent workshops on evidence-based practice have provided a valuable starting point for discussion of issues facing social work professionals.

The challenge now is to maintain and develop the dialogue, says workshop co-organiser Christa Fouche.

The second of two SPEaR Linkages-funded workshops on building bridges between research and practice was held at Massey University's Albany campus in June. It was informed by discussions at the first workshop (see "Starting a dialogue on evidence-based practice", *Bulletin*, July 2004), where participants identified the importance of discussion to address the needs of grass-roots practitioners, as well as taking a more strategic focus in terms of organisations, agencies, and fields of practice.

Speakers at the second workshop included Dr Barbara Disley, General Manager of Special Education at the Ministry of Education; Glenda Light, social work practitioner at the Taylor Centre; Phil Harrington, senior lecturer in sociology at the Auckland College of Education; and Nick Tuitasi, senior constable in the NZ Police.

The day also included small group discussion, which included looking at ways to continue the dialogue beyond the workshops.

"The two workshops brought together a range of practitioners and managers from across the social services. The workshops generated rich discussion and identified possibilities of evidence-based activity, as well as barriers to its development. Those attending the workshops suggested the days were enjoyable and a valuable starting-place, and they felt it was vital to continue discussions around evidence-based activity," Christa said.

Those at the workshop have decided to develop an electronic newsletter to help maintain the momentum. "We hope to have at least three newsletters during the next 12 months, with the first circulated this month," Christa said.

For more information on the workshops, go to www.spear.govt.nz or email C.B.Fouche@massey.ac.nz

Life tables report

Statistics New Zealand has recently published the New Zealand Life Tables (2000–2002). This report presents an analysis of the latest complete life tables for the Maori, non-Maori and total New Zealand populations which were released on 30 March 2004. The report also includes analysis of causes of death, sub-national mortality differentials, historical time series and an explanation of methods. Access this report at: <http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/pasfull/pasfull.nsf/web/Reference+Reports+New+Zealand+Life+Tables+2000-2002> or contact kim.dunstan@stats.govt.nz

Indicator guidelines

Statistics New Zealand has produced a guide for those who are developing, interpreting or disseminating indicators. It outlines generic criteria and definitions to aid in the selection and development of indicators. Indicators can be used to gauge any improvements, or to monitor a specific group or phenomenon. They can be used to monitor policy and to determine where intervention may be required. The guide is divided into four sections: criteria for indicator selection; working with indicators; definitions; and useful links. It was developed with input from a range of organisations. Access the guide at: http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/prod_serv.nsf/htmldocs/Indicator+Guidelines

Data integration

Information on a new method for creating statistical information is now available on the Statistics New Zealand website. The method involves integrating information from different sources to produce new statistical datasets which will enable improved research and analysis. This information gives an outline of statistical data integration, the technical issues and the associated privacy issues, along with a link to the data integration protocol. There is also summary information of the approved data integration projects: Student Loans; New Zealand Census Mortality Study; Matching 2001 Vitals to 2001 Census Data; Injury Statistics; and Linked Employer Employee Dataset (LEED) project. Read about data integration at <http://www.stats.govt.nz/domino/external/web/aboutsnz.nsf/htmldocs/Data+Integration> For more information, email sandra.mcdonald@stats.govt.nz