

## FOREWORD

This issue marks 30 volumes of the *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand* since its beginning in 1993. Looking back over these past 30 volumes, we have consistently aimed to cover a full range of social policy issues, and provided a forum for voices in government, academia and the community sector. This volume satisfies these aims particularly well, featuring papers across housing, health, censorship, child protection, human rights, disability, governance, living standards and immigration – and coming from NGOs, universities, professional organisations and government departments.

Child protection is an important theme of Issue 30. It is the focus of Child, Youth and Family, a core business of the Ministry of Social Development, and one of the policy papers is by Marie Connolly, our Chief Social Worker, and Mike Doolan, who held this position previously. They draw on their unique experience to explore the use of reviews of the maltreatment deaths of children who are known to the child protection agencies of the state. Two research papers also contribute to this theme. The paper by Terry Dobbs focuses on the findings of her study of schoolchildren's views of family discipline, the children's spontaneous accounts revealing levels of physical punishment that were frequent and severe enough to be considered abuse at any threshold. Tony Stanley examines the use of risk discourse in his analysis of interviews with child protection social workers, and discusses the emergent issues in the context of the differential response model currently under development in New Zealand.

Two papers address public health issues – one on healthy housing, and one on the place of gay men's health in the policy arena. Sarah Bierre, Philippa Howden-Chapman, Louise Signal and Chris Cunningham use archived policy documents to identify how the ideas and institutions of the past are still influencing housing policy issues today, in particular through the quality of the current stock of dwellings and the standards that govern them, and the historical exclusion of Māori from previous mainstream government administration. The paper by Jeffery Adams, Virginia Braun and Timothy McCreanor details the findings of an exploratory study interviewing health professionals about how gay men's health is approached in New Zealand.

A major research programme undertaken by the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation in the Ministry of Social Development is the Living Standards survey. John Jensen, Sathi Sathiyandra and Morna Matangi-Want describe the Living Standards research and the Economic Living Standards Index (ELSI) measure developed for this work. They also explore the notion of multiple disadvantage and how it can help us better understand differences in living standards.

Issue 30 also contains papers addressing concerns that cut right across the social policy arena. Claudia Geiringer and Matthew Palmer contribute a scoping of New Zealand's international human rights obligations and the implications of these for social policy development, focusing in particular on economic, social and cultural rights. They suggest some improvements to the current policy process to enhance our incorporation of a rights-based approach. Governance is the focus of Derek Wallace's paper: he applies an OECD framework for assessing the democratic quality of policy development to an example from New Zealand

Often research on very specific groups provides us with insights that have broader implications. John R. Grant's paper is about adults with intellectual disabilities who have been shifted from large institutions to living in the community. The study focused on quality of life, and the analysis looks at the wider context of current disability policy and the challenges it presents to community-based service providers. A paper contributed by Elena Maydell-Stevens, Anne-Marie Masgoret and Tony Ward explores the problems experienced by Russian-speaking immigrants in the course of resettlement in New Zealand. They discuss the effectiveness of migrants' different acculturation strategies in terms of their mental health, employment and lost benefits for the host society.

Several years ago, in Issue 19 of this journal, David Wilson outlined emerging challenges for policy in the area of censorship. Since then, the censorship laws have been amended, and David Wilson reviews these changes in light of his earlier recommendations.

Issue 30 finishes with a review by William Murdoch of *Implications of Population Ageing, Opportunities and Risks* edited by Jonathan Boston and Judith A. Davey.

I hope you find this issue of the journal both stimulating and rewarding.



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