

NZiRA NewZ

From the Director

NZiRA's Year

The end of 2003 marks the second year of NZiRA's existence as an Applied Research Centre of Victoria University. We feel proud of what we have accomplished and grateful to all those who have supported us. Among the latter have been the Hon Lianne Dalziel as Minister for Senior Citizens and Colin Blair as Retirement Commissioner. 2003 has seen the appointment of the Hon Ruth Dyson as a new Minister for Senior Citizens and we have begun to work with her as closely and as successfully as with her predecessor. Diana Crossan has taken over from Colin Blair as the new Retirement Commissioner. Her office is another key contact for NZiRA, which we hope to sustain and develop further. The presence of key people, such as the Retirement Commissioner, the Director of the Office for Senior Citizens and the CEO of Age Concern New Zealand, on the Advisory Board of NZiRA is vital to position the institute as the leading centre for ageing-related social research in this country. We owe special thanks to Colin Blair and David Richmond who retired from the board during 2003.



**NZiRA Director
Judith Davey**

The highlights of this year have been the seminar series – *Absolutely Positively Ageing* – three book launches, *Emergent Researchers* – the symposium for postgraduate students working on ageing – and the visit of the third TOWER fellow. Details of these events, and of our research and networking activities, will be set out in the NZiRA 2003 Annual Report, which will be appearing early in 2004.

While not all our applications for research funding have been successful, we have won a range of research contracts. Several of these continue into 2004. They cover a range of topics, but NZiRA is making its mark in research on the implications of ageing – “future-proofing” as we see it – especially in the areas of transport, housing, labour market issues and health services.

In August I visited the UK to attend the British Society of Gerontology Conference, where I gave a paper arising from our work on older people and transport. The trip gave me the opportunity to renew contacts and make new ones, all of which help in promoting international collaboration. As one example of this, while in my home town of York, I visited Hartrigg Oaks, described as the UK's first continuing care retirement community and spoke to researchers at York University who have been documenting residents' views. This provides an interesting example for our ongoing work on housing options for older people. I also took the opportunity to meet Professor Tom Kirkwood, who will be our TOWER fellow in 2004. Professor Kirkwood is a biological gerontologist, the author of *Time of Our Lives: The Science of Human Ageing* and of *Chance, Development and Ageing*. He is especially well known for giving the BBC Reith Lectures in 2001 on *The End of Age*.

We look forward to a continuing and varied range of activities in 2004. Thanks again to all who have helped to make things happen and will continue to do so for the future.

Judith Davey

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The TOWER fellowship



Norah Keating with Karyn Fenton of TOWER

Canadian Professor Norah Keating was in New Zealand in November speaking to groups on the well-being of older people and the roles of families and government in providing care. Professor Keating, of the University of Alberta, visited New Zealand as the TOWER Fellow at the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing at Victoria University.

Dr. Keating is interested in issues faced by families as they grow older. Part of her research program is focussed on family caregiving and policies to support informal caregivers. She is interested in how families work out the process of caring for frail older members, and in how they interact with formal caregivers. Norah gave several presentations on balancing formal and family care for older people. She challenged the assumptions that families do not care enough and that they will withdraw their efforts if too many formal services are provided or if they are paid at all. In Canada the proportion of people who give care to older family members and friends is going up and it is estimated that 300,000 paid workers would be needed to replace their unpaid contributions. Families provide significant amounts of care even for people living in rest homes and similar settings. Of special concern, according to Norah, are family members and friends who provide large amounts of care on their own, and without adequate support, and also those who are “caring at a distance”, often involving long hours of travel.

Dr. Keating conducts policy research on issues such as shifting responsibility for caring from formal to informal caregivers and the impact of health policy reform on informal caregivers. Population ageing has significant implications for government and Norah has worked extensively with Canadian federal, provincial and local government agencies. “A number of key groups - caregivers, care receivers, employers and the public - incur costs as a consequence of informal care of older people. What role should government be playing, now and in the future? What do health authorities need to think about if they are trying to promote healthy ageing?” she asks.

In the past, says Norah, ageing well implied that people should withdraw from society when they retired, but this has now changed radically so that positive ageing implies being actively involved in society. Even so, older adults are often still seen as unproductive and dependent. Her research team have been studying the involvement of older adults in paid and unpaid work in an attempt to challenge some of these assumptions.

Several of Dr. Keating’s presentations posed the question “Are rural areas a good place to grow old? On the one hand rural communities are seen as supportive – where everyone knows one another and provides support. But rural areas are often lacking in services for older people. She gave the example of parts of Canada which are 1500 kilometers from a hospital and where winter temperatures can be 50 degrees below freezing point. The research which Norah is carrying out in Canada is examining how and why rural communities differ in the level of support they give to their older citizens. Farming communities are different from retirement communities and both face special challenges in access to health and other services. Ultimately this research is intended to provide direction to government on models of care that best meet the needs of the variety of rural communities.

Dr. Keating’s programme included meetings with government agencies in Wellington, with researchers, and with voluntary organisations and service providers throughout New Zealand. She gave public lectures in Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, New Plymouth, Hamilton and Auckland. In addition she met with rural interest groups in the Wairarapa, Canterbury and Otago.

NZiRA can learn a great deal from visitors such as Norah Keating. Her visit has shown considerable similarities between Canada and New Zealand, despite differences in size and population. Both countries have about 12% of their populations now over 65 and can expect rapid ageing in the future. In the next 40 years New Zealand faces a 600 per cent increase in numbers of very old people. NZiRA is leading research into the implications of this trend. We are examining how to ensure that frail older people in New Zealand receive high quality care and that the well-being of the caregivers is protected.

Publications

Maximising the Potential of Older Workers, By Judith Davey and Justine Cornwall

Published by NZiRA, October.

Our latest NZiRA report was launched at the *Age Advantage Forum* in Christchurch on 10 October, by The Hon. Ruth Dyson. It raises and discusses issues related to change in the New Zealand workforce, especially the ageing of the workforce and the consequences of smaller cohorts of young workers entering it. The report brings together New Zealand data and research findings on older workers, with selected overseas material. As well as setting the scene for change, the report challenges myths about older workers and explores their strengths and weaknesses. While not solely aimed at employers, the report suggests how they could make the most of older workers by providing flexible working conditions and phased retirement and by recognising the needs of working carers of dependent older people. *Maximising the Potential of Older Workers* arises from the stream of work on mid-life which has been going on in NZiRA for two years.

Copies of *Maximising the Potential of Older Workers* are available free of charge from NZiRA and from the Third Age Centre in Cashel Street, Christchurch.



Ruth Dyson, Minister for Senior Citizens at the launch in Christchurch

Research News

Combining Work and Care – Older Workers, Eldercare and the Work-Life Balance

Contract through the Future of Work Fund, Labour Market Policy Group, Department of Labour

The project aims to document the nature and extent of eldercare responsibilities among the workforce of Wellington and Christchurch City Councils and the ways in which these employees combine work and care. We have completed screening to find out which people have eldercare responsibilities and distributed questionnaires to those that do, obtaining a very good response. In addition four group interviews were held in Wellington and four in Christchurch, at which issues could be gone into in more detail. This is an issue which will no doubt gain prominence in the future but, to our knowledge, this is the first piece of research on working carers of older people in New Zealand.

Coping without a car Transport Issues for Older People without Private Transport

Contract for the Office for Senior Citizens

The Positive Ageing Strategy includes the goal of *Affordable and Accessible Transport for Older People* and this lies within the overall aim of improving the opportunities for older people to participate in the community in the ways that they choose. Earlier NZiRA work on Older People and Transport indicated strong preferences for private transport. Clearly access to private transport is an important element in quality of life and in contributing to the community participation envisaged in the Positive Ageing Strategy. The question then arises of how older people meet their transport needs and maintain their lifestyles when they no longer have access to private transport. Through the Office for Senior Citizens' network of Volunteer Community Coordinators, we are recruiting older people who fit the profile and we will be interviewing throughout the country, beginning in early February.

Accommodation Options for Older People in Aotearoa/New Zealand

Contract for the Centre for Housing Research, Aotearoa New Zealand (CHRANZ) with Business and Economic Research Ltd.(BERL)

The availability of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of an ageing population is part of the challenge posed by population ageing. There is special concern for the housing and care needs of vulnerable groups within the older population – those on low incomes, those suffering from chronic illness or disability, those whose housing conditions are currently inadequate. The special needs of older Maori, Pacific People and women must be addressed. The project will scope the present situation of older people with respect to housing and will also look to the future and assess emerging issues and needs and will review international literature on good practice and innovation in housing for older people. Current models of housing for older people, overseas models and some practical case studies will be evaluated using social and economic cost-benefit analysis. A programme of consultation among key stakeholders and communities, including Maori and Pacific People will also be an integral part of the project.

Postgraduate Symposium

Emerging Researchers—Research Symposium for Postgraduate Thesis Students working on topics relevant to Ageing in New Zealand

**The papers from the symposium have been published on the SPEaR web-site -
www.spear.govt.nz**

Feedback from Symposium participants

“It was a great experience for me, I enjoyed finding out how many energetic people are into this area in New Zealand”.

“Thank you for organising the symposium last week, it was a real boost for me. I am re-energised”.

“It certainly helped me to feel a little less in a vacuum. I would love to participate in the next one. Maybe my research will be more advanced so I will not feel so shy about it next time”.

“Thank you for two wonderful days. The network opportunities were great, an amazing group of people”.



We wish all NZiRA network members and supporters a very happy Christmas, New Year, summer break, or whatever you celebrate at this time of the year.

We welcome your feedback and appreciate your support

From everyone who has worked with NZiRA during 2003

Judith, Justine, Katie, Kirsty and Sebastian

