



## *NZiRA News No.28 – December 2006*

### From the Director

This will be my last newsletter as NZiRA Director and I shall miss communicating with you every two months—although I am happy to leave the institute in Sally’s more than capable hands. I will still be around. After a holiday in Australia in February, I will continue as a Senior Associate in the Institute of Policy Studies at Victoria University—I will not be far away! The IPS has been my publisher over the years, through the *From Birth to Death* books, *Social Assessment and Central Government*, *Another New Zealand Experiment*, and, most recently, *Opportunities and Risks: The Implications of Population Ageing* (see below). I still have a few “irons in the fire” in the form of research work, ongoing and applied for, and will be on the look out for interesting projects.

We joke that we do not use the R-word around here, and there has been a great deal of discussion among social scientists about the re-conceptualisation of retirement. Diana Crossan—the in-coming chair of the NZiRA Advisory Board and the Retirement Commissioner, called for a new word for retirement in the 2004 seminar series. What is retirement? The dictionary definition is “*To withdraw, go away, retreat, become unsociable, seek seclusion from the world*”. I certainly do not see the rest of my life in these terms! Retirement can be:

- An event or ceremony—traditionally involving the gift of a time piece
- A process – separation from employment—possibly more accurately moving out from a career job
- A life stage—dominated by leisure
- An alternative lifestyle— one promoted by the marketers of golf clubs and motor homes
- An ageist social construction—consistent with the “withdrawal” theory of ageing.



I see it as a period of transition and, for many older people, a period of choice. In New Zealand, our universal, flat-rate superannuation provides a basic income which many supplement from savings, in whatever form. A few are lucky enough to have occupational pensions. From this basis, most people have some choice of how to use their time, whether this be on hobbies, voluntary work, travel or family activities, including caring for young and old family members. There is the choice to seek paid work—often part-time or casual—although many may be restricted by age discrimination, poor health or the availability of work in the areas and locations they would like to be employed. Self-employment is an option for some. Our current research includes qualitative, life-course based interviews with people aged 55 to 70, as part of the *Health, Work and Retirement* Project. This makes it clear that events throughout life influence our choices about when to retire, how to retire and what we will do with the rest of our lives. I am a participant observer and I am learning a lot from my peers—as well as collecting rich research material.

*Judith Davey*

## Ageing in New Zealand: Reporting Research Progress

A one-day conference, jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Social Development, NZiRA and the New Zealand Association of Gerontology, took place at the Te Para Convention Centre on 13 November. It was very well supported, with about 250 people attending from a range of organisations and sectors. The Maori kapa haka group from the Ministry of Social Development set the tone with songs and a speech of welcome and Judith Davey pointed out that longer life should be viewed as an achievement that we should celebrate and not as a crisis. Nevertheless there are still challenges. Hal Kendig from Sydney (pictured with Marcus James of the MSD) gave the keynote address, outlining the situation of research on ageing internationally and telling us about some of the Australian initiatives. Later the conference was addressed by the Hon. David Benson-Pope, Minister of Social Development, who outlined recent policy initiatives, including increased funding for residential care and new measures to encourage older people into the workforce. The panel—*Research and Policy: Dancing in Step?*—was lively and challenging. There were four streams of papers in the morning and four in the afternoon—with 32 presentations in all. The session themes included living standards and wellbeing, retirement and employment, ageing in place, elder care and policy perspectives. The only complaint was not being able to be at all four concurrent sessions simultaneously. The Te Papa venue was congenial and stimulating and not too many delegates were lured away by the fascinating museum exhibits. Thanks are due to the organising committee and all the sponsors.



## Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) Book Launch

### *Opportunities and Risk: The Implications of Population Ageing*

Edited by Jonathan Boston and Judith Davey (pictured), this 388-page book was launched on 11 October. It contains up-to-date information on ageing trends in New Zealand and their policy implications, including forward projections of fiscal costs and likely demand for services. It can be obtained from the IPS — [ips@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:ips@vuw.ac.nz).



## Looking back over the achievements of NZiRA

In addition to conducting its own research programmes, fostering research on ageing in general and facilitating communication among researchers, NZiRA aims to communicate the findings of research in order to improve public awareness of issues related to ageing and to inform practice, and policy. Looking back over the last five or so years, what have we done to pursue these aims?

### Public Seminar series

2002 - 2020 – *What will New Zealand look like when half the population is over 40?*

2003 - *Absolutely Positively Ageing - the positive roles of older people in society* (sponsored by TOWER).

2004 - *The End of Retirement (as we know it)?* (sponsored by TOWER).

### Public Lectures

These have, to some extent, taken over from the seminar series. Examples from 2005 and 2006 include lectures delivered by Sara Arber from the UK, Jenny Gierveld, from the Netherlands, Jacqui Smith from Germany and Alastair Campbell from the UK. These have often been in collaboration with other organisations, especially the Wellington Branch of the NZ Association of Gerontology (NZAG).

### Conferences

Building on successful conferences in 1996, 1998 and 2000, sponsored by the FRST-funded programme on Positive Ageing in the VUW School of Psychology, NZiRA and the NZAG jointly organised the conference *Ageing in a diverse New Zealand/Aotearoa*, in June 2002. This helped to foster relationships between researchers, organisations and individuals with an interest in positive ageing.

In November 2006, NZiRA and the NZAG, with the Ministry of Social Development and other sponsors, organised a one-day conference *Research on Ageing in New Zealand: Reporting research progress* (see above).

### Visits by overseas experts

Under the NZiRA/TOWER visiting fellowships programme, five visits, incorporating lectures tours in the main centres, have been arranged;

- 2001 – Professor Anthea Tinker, of the Age Concern Institute of Gerontology, University of London, speaking on social policy and ageing, especially housing and care policies.
- 2002 - Dr. Jordan Kosberg, Professor of Social Work at the University of Alabama, who has published extensively on elder abuse and the care of very old people and takes an especial interest in issues for older men.
- 2003 - Professor Norah Keating, from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada, who is a family gerontologist. Her research is in family care-giving and policies to support informal care-givers.
- 2004 – Professor Tom Kirkwood, of the University of Newcastle, UK. Tom Kirkwood is a biological gerontologist, concerned with what makes people age physically. He presented the BBC Reith Lectures in 2002.
- 2005 - Dr. Mary Davies, recently retired Director of the Pre-Retirement Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Dr. Davies raised issues about managing an ageing workforce and also lectured on sexuality and older people.
- In 2006, the NZiRA fellow was sponsored by Southern Cross Healthcare. Dr. Patricia Moore was our visitor – an internationally known exponent of inclusive design and design for an ageing society.

### Publications

In addition to research reports published by commissioning agencies and publication of papers in New Zealand and international journals, NZiRA has published its own monograph series, including : *Life at 85 plus: A Statistical Review* (Davey and Gee 2002 and *Maximising the Potential of Older Workers* (Davey and Cornwall 2003 currently being updated and to be re-published). We published bibliographies of New Zealand research on ageing in 2002 and 2005.

## Director's Diary

I have become a little behind on this in the last few newsletters, so here is a catch-up:

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|-------------|--|
| 20 April    | Keynote address at Council of Christian Social Services Conference – <i>Future Directions in Services for Older People</i> . Dunedin.              |
| 19 May      | Recorded interview for Chris Laidlaw's Sunday Morning panel on care of older people, National Programme Radio NZ.                                  |
| 13 June     | Presentation to Ministry of Social Development Planning Day – <i>Emerging Issues for Policy on Ageing</i> , Wellington.                            |
| 15 June     | Presentation of Advisory Council for Senior Citizens – <i>Progress towards the objectives of the Positive Ageing Strategy</i> , Wellington.        |
| 21 June     | <i>Equity Release: An Option for Older Home Owners</i> . Financial Planners and Insurance Advisers Conference, Auckland.                           |
| 28 July     | <i>Equity release: Consumer Perspectives</i> . Retirement Commission Seminar, Wellington.  |
| 7 September | <i>Policy Responses to Population Ageing: The New Zealand Positive Ageing Strategy</i> . British Society of Gerontology Conference, Bangor, Wales. |
| 4 October   | Panellist, Wellington Architecture Week event. <i>Designing for an Older Population</i> .  |
| 23 November | <i>Issues for an Ageing Workforce</i> . New Zealand Society of Local Government Managers HR Conference, Wellington .                               |
| 3 December  | Contribution to Insight Documentary on licensing of older drivers, National Programme, Radio New Zealand.  |

In preparation for taking over as Director in mid-January, Sally Keeling spent time with us after the research conference and met with prospective members of a re-formed Advisory Board for NZiRA , which you will be hearing more about soon. Sally will be back in Wellington for a spell in early December to discuss the programme for 2007 and how existing projects and activities will be carried over.

## NOTICES

NEW ZEALAND  
ASSOCIATION OF  
GERONTOLOGY



The next meeting of the Wellington Branch of the New Zealand Association of Gerontology will be a presentation by Margaret Guthrie and Jennie Jones—

### *When do we know it's grief?*

Tuesday 5 December, 6.00-7.00 pm Wellington Central Library, 65 Victoria Street, mezzanine meeting room. Light refreshments will be available from 5.40 pm.

## **Graduate level paper offered on-line via the University of Waikato.**

### **HDC0501-07A (NET) Ageing in Society**

This paper examines the concept of ageing at an individual and societal level from a social science perspective. It considers how ageing is constituted in the social-cultural and political discourses, analyses the meanings and images associated with ageing, reflects on the changing research agenda in social gerontology, and considers the way older people experience their everyday life in Aotearoa New Zealand. You are able to pursue your own particular interest in gerontology via the assessment tasks.

*The paper is offered in Semester A and commences in late February 2007. It is available to anyone with has an interest in ageing who is enrolled in graduate studies. However, you should seek clarification from your course advisor to ensure this paper can be credited to your qualification. There is no on-campus requirement and the class meets once a week for a 2-3 hour lecture/discussion on-line via the virtual classroom.*

For more details contact - Dr Bevan C Grant at [bcg@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:bcg@waikato.ac.nz)

## **Alzheimers New Zealand National Conference Dementia Across the Ages**

Thursday 26 April 2007 – Saturday 28 April 2007  
Michael Fowler Centre, Wellington.

Details of keynote speakers and other information can be found on the website: [www.alzheimers.org.nz/conference.php](http://www.alzheimers.org.nz/conference.php)

Abstract submission close on Friday 8 December. Registrations will open in January. For further information contact: [nationaloffice@alzheimers.org.nz](mailto:nationaloffice@alzheimers.org.nz). Phone: 04 381 2362



*Wishing all the NZiRA Network Members, in New Zealand and throughout the world a very Happy Festive Season, enjoyable and restorative summer holidays and a safe, prosperous and very Positively Ageing New Year.*

*Judith*

