



## Newsletter No 38

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It is with real regret that I write this 38<sup>th</sup> newsletter from NZiRA, in the knowledge that this will be the final edition. The University has decided to implement a recommendation of the School of Government Research Review, released in February 2009, that NZiRA be closed, and that any remaining staff be transferred into the Institute for Policy Studies. It has been further decided that this closure and transfer should occur at the end of March, which will have the effect that the period remaining of my contract as Director of NZiRA will be worked through to the end of 2009, from an IPS base. Given that the role of the NZiRA Advisory Board, and my own role as Director and editor of this newsletter was to “maintain and promote the growth of multidisciplinary research on ageing” and to develop relationships with “key stakeholders and strategic partners” to this end, the Advisory Board has itself held its final meetings during March 2009.

During the transfer process, I will make every effort to ensure that the transition is smoothed, with particular regard to ensuring ready access through web-links to the NZiRA website, and our publications and resources. It has however been decided that maintaining and keeping the NZiRA mailing lists current with regular postings is not feasible, given that there is not going to be a process to replace my role as Director.

My work programme during 2009 (and the budgetary provision for this) remains unchanged, in terms of continuing reporting and writing on current and recently completed research work and participation in the 2009 Visitor's programme, and the remainder of this newsletter presents recent, current and planned activities. I will make strong continuing efforts to play an effective networking role in the “community of interest” which surrounds NZiRA, and remain strongly committed to the mission of NZiRA from the time of its establishment in 2000. I very much regret that under current conditions, VUW is unable to continue to support the growth and strength of this vital aspect of any university's engagement in building research-based understanding of NZ as an ageing society.

I value the support of colleagues and neighbours on the corridor of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor, of Railway West Wing (albeit in person only until December 2009), and more widely across the School and University, as well as the connections with the over 500 people to whom this newsletter goes in New Zealand and around the world. While this message may signal the “end of an era” for NZiRA (I am forgoing the chance to continue in this rhyming style!), it is very clear that in different organisational forms, the work will continue – perhaps supported in new and innovative ways with virtual institutional arrangements.

**From Diana Crossan, Retirement Commissioner, Chair of NZiRA Advisory Board, 2007-March 2009.**

NZiRA is important for New Zealand. We all know the significance of the demographics; we all know New Zealand has a large group of baby boomers who, while not yet 'old' will in the next ten years change the profile of our aged population in ways never seen before in our history. Research into what this means for New Zealand is vital now. I trust that with the changes Victoria University is making by folding NZiRA into the Institute of Policy Studies, the university does not lose sight of these significant changes in our population and end up ignoring this essential area of academic study. The Retirement Commission has worked closely with NZiRA since its inception and we hope to continue our relationship with VUW in this vital work!

**From Terry Stokes, Head, School of Government**

The decision to support the recommendation of the recent review of the School of Government's research to close NZiRA was taken with a heavy heart. As Director, Dr Sally Keeling has worked tirelessly on grant applications. The Advisory Board of NZiRA, Chaired by Diana Crossan, could not have been more enthusiastic in its support. Sadly, funding support for research into ageing in New Zealand is not generous and, in the end, these efforts did not bear sufficient fruit to justify the continued existence of a free-standing institute within the School. It is hard to believe that demographic pressures will not eventually lead to an enhanced focus from government in New Zealand on ageing. The Institute for Policy Studies has an existing interest in the area, which made folding NZiRA into the IPS attractive from the point of view of maintaining the School's engagement with ageing.

**From Verna Schofield, President, NZ Association of Gerontology**

Members of the New Zealand Association of Gerontology will mourn the loss of NZiRA. Our two organisations have often worked closely in the promotion of visiting speakers and the dissemination of knowledge on ageing. We have greatly valued our association together.

Over the past nine years, NZiRA has established a niche position within the age-related research community. By growing strong national communication networks and hosting symposia for postgraduate students, research capacity has been enhanced around New Zealand. The institute has also made a unique contribution with its emphasis on policy and in forging age-interest links between the public, private and voluntary sectors.

At a time when empirical data are most needed to plan for population ageing, this country can ill afford to lose a key institute such as NZiRA. In the past, administrators at the Victoria University of Wellington have shown foresight in encouraging the development of the institute. We trust that this same spirit of enterprise will now ensure that research on ageing continues to be fostered and strengthened within the University.

## 2009 NZiRA VISITOR

### Professor Alan Walker, University of Sheffield, England.

It is with great pleasure that we can announce that Professor Alan Walker has accepted our invitation to be the 2009 Visiting Fellow to NZiRA. His visit to New Zealand will take place in October (5<sup>th</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup>), 2009. We formally acknowledge the generous funding assistance from the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation which supports this Visitor's Programme.

*In addition to his role as Director of the UK New Dynamics of Ageing Research Project, Prof Walker has global status in the field of research in ageing, as Director of the European Research Area in Ageing, and as an advisor to the UN on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and WHO on active ageing. He hopes to share as much of this experience as possible with New Zealand researchers at all stages of their careers.*

*In accepting our invitation, Prof Walker has written:  
"As well as directing the UK's largest ever research programme on ageing, I bring a European and global perspective. Equally, I am coming to NZ to learn from colleagues about their research priorities and NZ examples of good practice in research and policy making. Ultimately I hope that the visit will have mutual benefits and will start longer term collaborations with UK and other European researchers in this field. Ageing is a global phenomenon and we need international research collaboration if we are to produce the best evidence for policy and practice aimed at successful adjustment to this historically unique development."*

Professor Alan Walker  
(BA, DLitt, Hon. D.Soc.Sc. (HKBU), FRSA, AcSS)  
Professor of Social Policy and Social Gerontology  
Director of the New Dynamics of Ageing Programme

#### Academic Profile

Dr Alan Walker joined the University of Sheffield in 1977. He directed the £3.5 million ESRC Growing Older Programme, 1999-2004, and the UK National Collaboration on Ageing Research, 2001-2004. He is currently Director of the £20 million ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC, MRC and AHRC New Dynamics of Ageing Programme and is also Director of the European Research Area in Ageing and is spending most of his time on research.

#### Research

His research interests span a wide range in social analysis, social policy and social planning. He Chairs the European Foundation on Social Quality, which is based in Amsterdam. He currently directs the New Dynamics of Ageing Research Programme funded by five UK Research Councils. He has published more than 20 books, over 200 reports and more than 300 papers in scholarly journals and edited volumes; his work has been published in more than 20 languages. He is a founding



Academician of the Academy for Learned Societies in the Social Sciences. He has been active in the UK voluntary sector for many years and co-founded the Disability Alliance in 1974, and is currently Patron of the National Pensioner's Convention.

### A SELECTION OF PROF WALKER'S MAJOR PUBLICATIONS

Walker, A. (2006) (ed.) *Understanding Quality of Life in Old Age*, Buckingham, Open University Press.

Walker, A. (2005) (ed.) *Growing Older in Europe*, Maidenhead, Open University Press / McGraw Hill.

Walker, A. and Hagan Hennessy, C. (2004) (eds) *Growing Older - Quality of Life in Old Age*, Maidenhead, Open University Press/McGraw Hill.

For further information about research on ageing in the UK and Europe .....

New Dynamics of Ageing website:

<http://www.newdynamics.group.shef.ac.uk/>

ERA-AGE website: <http://era-age.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Growing Older Programme:

<http://www.growingolder.group.shef.ac.uk/index.htm>

European Forum website:

<http://www.ageingresearch.group.shef.ac.uk/>

Department of Sociological Studies web site:

<http://www.shef.ac.uk/socstudies/>

**Associate Professor Michael Fine**, University of Macquarie, Sydney was warmly welcomed to NZiRA during his February visit. He gave two very well attended and received seminars, sharing his research expertise in studies of social isolation and inclusion in Australia. With the Director, and colleagues from IPS, he also took part in a working seminar with public and private sector policy analysts and service providers about the challenges shared by Australia and NZ in ensuring the sustainable growth of the aged care workforce.



Continuing our international theme.....

## Ageing in India – Rhetoric and Reality

Judith Davey

Last December, with support from NZiRA and the New Zealand Association of Gerontology (for which I am most grateful), I attended the International Symposium and Conference of Gerontology and Geriatrics and 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial meeting of the Association of Gerontology (India) at the Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh, India. I was especially interested in how policy on ageing has been developed and implemented in India.<sup>1</sup>

A few statistics underline differences between ageing in New Zealand and India. Life expectancy at birth in India is 67 for males and 72 for females, as against 74 and 80, respectively, in New Zealand. Over 80% of older Indians live with their children or grand-children and less than 4% live alone. In New Zealand 80% live either alone or with a spouse/partner only. The 60 plus group was 7% of India's population in 2001 and 16% of New Zealand's. In total there are 80 million people aged 60 plus in India; 51 million are below the poverty line, 70% are illiterate and 90% have no financial or social security.

In 1999, the Government of India, Social Justice and Empowerment Ministry, formulated the National Policy on Older Persons, having deliberated since 1984. This-

*seeks to assure older persons that their concerns are national concerns and they will not live unprotected, ignored or marginalized. The goal of the National Policy is the well-being of older persons. It aims to strengthen their legitimate place in society and help older persons to live their last phase of life with purpose, dignity and peace.*

What follows is an extensive agenda of measures to ensure financial security, healthcare and nutrition, education and welfare. A session at the conference evaluated progress towards these goals over almost a decade and found it lacking. One problem is the dependence on the states to implement the policy in Indian's federal system. But, to date, only 4 of 20 states have announced their own old age policies. One conference delegate cited "increasing socio-political apathy towards the problems of the old" as why the policy remains only on paper. In his paper, S.D.Gokhale called the policy "a shopping list", with no clear budget support and no teeth "good policy but bad implementation and no review mechanism".

In theory, all people aged 60 plus in India are eligible for a means-tested pension of Rs.400 per month (roughly NZ\$16), if below poverty line. The amount is very variable, some states (Kerala is a good example) supplement the amount given by central government, but more pass on less than the allocated funds. Papers presented at

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<sup>1</sup> More information on the conference itself can be found in the forthcoming NZAG newsletter, see [www.gerontology.org.nz](http://www.gerontology.org.nz).

the conference suggested that 50% of eligible older people do not receive the pension and 20% "don't deserve it".

A more recent policy initiative is the *Maintenance of Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007*, which sets out the legal right of older people to financial maintenance by their children. People aged 60 plus can apply to a tribunal (or be represented by a recognised voluntary organisation) to claim financial support up to a maximum of Rs. 10,000 per month (NZ\$400). No comment was available at the conference on how this legislation is working out. Given the tradition of caring for older people within the family in many Asian cultures it seems odd that it was deemed necessary. However, a paper presented by Dr. Jyotsna Kalavaran pointed out that social change – dual career families, nuclear-oriented family structure, modernisation and westernisation – is leading to the erosion of traditional values, but that welfare rights for older people are not entrenched. Other papers pointed out high levels of elder abuse, suggesting that up to one in three older Indians are subject to some form of abuse and neglect, mostly by their families in co-resident situations. The plight of older widows is especially unenviable. Tension between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is almost a given, and O.P. Monga presented case studies of middle class families in which wives alleged that their husbands were paying too much attention to their mothers, leading to threats of suicide and divorce.

The *Maintenance of Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act 2007* provides for the establishment of "aged care homes" by state governments. These are a very new feature of aged care in India, apart from work by religious charities (there were two homes for older women in the YWCA in Chennai, adjacent to the guest house where I stayed). Conference delegates were critical of the "Pay and Stay" homes in metropolitan areas, citing the absence of regulation and concern about standards of care. Further provisions include the training of police and making abandonment of an older person a punishable offence. Discussion at the conference raised a number of questions. Is legislation the answer to ensure security for older Indians? Can families be coerced into looking after their older members? How will the Act meet the needs of rural, illiterate and impoverished families? How can it be expected to work when there is no budget or action plan? Like many things in India, the scale of the situation is daunting, especially coming from a New Zealand context.



Mr.Subramanram, Judith Davey and Manoo Vathisunthorn (Thailand)

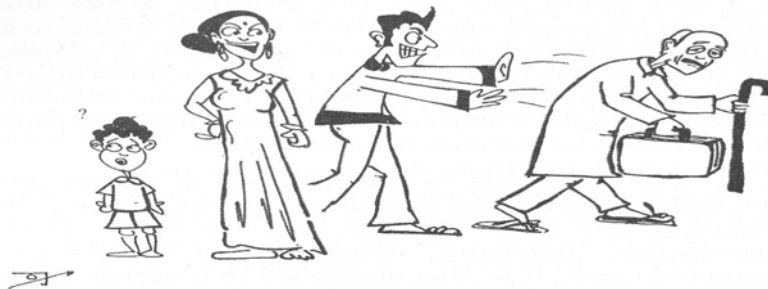


Illustration from *The Joy of Ageing* by P.V.Ramamurthi, launched at the conference. Cartoonist Lova Raju.

## **Bibliography of New Zealand population ageing research June 2005 – December 2008**

**This significant bibliography has been compiled by the independent Working Group, convened by the Ministry of Social Development (Older Persons Policy Unit) to enhance population ageing research. It seeks to build upon the previous bibliographies produced by the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing (NZiRA), and uses the categories developed in the 2005 bibliography, with some additions.**

**The bibliography is now available on the NZiRA website, and reflects the continuing work of Dr Virginia Wilton, now working within this MSD Unit, and who previously worked at NZiRA on the 2005 bibliography with the then NZiRA Director, Dr Judith Davey.**

**The release of this bibliography and the planned activities of the Working Group during 2009 are a focus for the newly appointed General Manager, Older People's Policy Unit, Dianne Rogers.**

**Dianne started with the Ministry in late February 2009. She is quickly coming up to speed on the range of retirement income, New Zealand Superannuation, positive ageing and population ageing policy issues relevant to older and ageing New Zealanders.**

**Previously, Dianne was employed by the Auckland DHB as the Manager, Allied Health services and Rehab Plus. Prior to this, she lived in Australia where she was the Executive Director of the Office of Seniors Interests in WA from 1993 to 1999, and then the founding Chief Executive of the Positive Ageing Foundation of Australia from 1999 to 2002.**

**Her particular strengths are in specialist knowledge of ageing-related policies and initiatives, and in her significant leadership experience.**

**Dianne is especially interested in healthy ageing and aged care, mature workers, elder abuse and neglect prevention, mature consumer studies and multigenerational programmes.**

## **Postgraduate Symposium for Emerging Researchers – Plans for 2009**

Three of these events have been held (2003, 2005 and 2007), all fulfilling NZIRA's aims of fostering and supporting the effective development of research interest in aspects of ageing in New Zealand. Each event has been well supported and highly valued by sponsors, students and participants in the past.

It is important that sponsorship funds, networking opportunities and administrative capacity be used to best effect under 2009 conditions, so I have decided not to offer a 4<sup>th</sup> in this symposia series as a stand alone event. Instead, I encourage students, new and potential researchers to take part in the combined NZAG and Age Concern Conference being held in October, in Wellington: ([www.gerontology.org.nz](http://www.gerontology.org.nz)). I have offered to convene a workshop within the conference to continue supporting opportunities for graduate and new researchers in this field to meet and discuss their emerging ideas, and would welcome expressions of interest from graduate students who may wish to contribute to this workshop. Those who have taken part in earlier symposia will be able to share their experiences and findings, and reflections on their research journey in this workshop, as well as in all parts of what is expected to be a rich and varied conference programme.