

2009 VISITOR REPORT



During 2008, Professor Alan Walker accepted an invitation to be the 2009 Visiting Fellow to NZiRA. His visit to New Zealand took place in October 2009, with generous funding assistance from the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation. His visit concludes a significant series of events in the last nine years, during which NZiRA helped New Zealand groups of researchers, policy makers, students, business groups and community organisations become engaged in the breadth and significance of issues relating to ageing populations.

Previous visitors to NZiRA were funded by a five year sponsorship with TOWER: Prof Anthea Tinker (2001), Prof Jordan Kosberg (2002), Prof Norah Keating (2003), Prof Tom Kirkwood (2004) and Mrs Mary Davies (2005). In 2006, Southern Cross were the sponsors for the NZiRA visitor, Patti Moore. From 2007-2009, once NZiRA moved into the School of Government, the VUW Foundation made it possible to continue the series by supporting two short visits, made by Dr Hilary Arksey in late 2008, Ass Prof Michael Fine in early 2009, and finally, Prof Walker's visit.

During his visit, Prof Walker gave the opening Keynote address to the 2009 Conference of the New Zealand Association of Gerontology and Age Concern New Zealand. His topic for that address was **Active Ageing: its promise and potential**. There is a link to an initial report on the conference at <http://www.ageconcern.org.nz/safety/conference-2009>, and his address will be available there and via www.gerontology.org.nz in due course. He also gave several media interviews (those with Kim Hill and with the One in Five programme will have audio downloads available, through Radio New Zealand). In the days after the conference, Prof Walker also contributed to three separate events, in Wellington arranged by NZiRA, through the Institute of Policy Studies.

He spoke to a Ministry of Social Development Forum, and four local commentators responded, covering issues in housing, health, human rights and social policy. That presentation "**Population Ageing: The research-policy interface**" will be available on the new NZiRA pages within the Institute of Policy Studies website in December 2009.

At a meeting hosted by the Retirement Commissioner, his talk was on "**European Approaches to Pension Sustainability**". A videocast of that talk is being prepared for access at www.retirement.org.nz.

The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) held a Round Table meeting with a small group of invited participants, which began with a short outline of a discussion

paper prepared by Dr Judith Davey and Dr Sally Keeling: **Support and caring for dependent older people: how should responsibility be shared?** Prof Walker then made a valuable commentary outlining some of the ways this question is being addressed in the UK and Europe. This group plans to reconvene in 2010, to continue this discussion, as part of IPS plans to keep issues relating to population ageing on the agenda for public debate, research and policy development.

Those who were able to hear Prof Walker speak found interest, challenge and knowledge, based on his global experience in the UK (as Director of the UK New Dynamics of Ageing Research Project), in Europe (where he is Director of the European Research Area in Ageing), and internationally (as an advisor to the UN on the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing and WHO on active ageing).

Despite the changed situation at NZiRA, Prof Walker and many NZ colleagues within the New Zealand Association of Gerontology, for example, continue to be hopeful that this visit will have ongoing mutual benefits in terms of working towards longer term collaborations, between New Zealand, Australian, UK and other European and possibly Commonwealth researchers in this field. As Prof Walker said, "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."

Prepared by Dr Sally Keeling, Senior Research Fellow, NZiRA/IPS, November 2009.

New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing is now closed, and transferred to Institute of Policy Studies: from Dec 2009, website will transfer to www.ips.ac.nz

Other New Zealand links:

New Zealand Association of Gerontology www.gerontology.org.nz

Age Concern New Zealand www.ageconcern.org.nz/

For links regarding Prof Alan Walker:

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/>