



Greetings from Director Jan Pryor

As you will see in this newsletter, the Centre is growing apace. We have several new staff - Bill Siddells is our new project co-ordinator for the Connectedness in Youth project; Vanessa Rogers has joined us for three months (and we hope longer) to work on a project with Jeremy and myself; and Tolotea Lanumata is with us as a Pacific young researcher. The mezzanine floor is alive with the voices of young people, including our two Ph.D students, Vanessa, and several other graduate students who have taken possession of desks in sunny positions.

We have been fortunate, too, to win several project grants. Jeremy and I are undertaking, with Vanessa's help, a literature review for the Families Commission addressing the impact of government policies on family forms and structures. Jeremy and I have also been successful in obtaining 'Blue Skies' funding for two projects. Jeremy's will be to analyse data from a recent survey undertaken by Relationship Services that examined attitudes to partnership, parenting, and living alone. Mine will consider the ways in which families can be understood by reference to the history of families, and the use of secular rituals by families.

Jeremy and I are also about to start a project that investigates how parents make decisions about early childhood education. It is funded by the Ministry of Education, and will involve interviews with parents and then the development of a survey for a bigger group of parents to complete.

Overall, 6 Wai-te-ata Road is an exciting and busy place to be. We would welcome a visit from you if you care to drop in sometime.

Jan.

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Advisory Board Member Murray Edridge

CEO, Barnardos New Zealand

We share the privilege of living in this wonderful country of ours - Aotearoa New Zealand. This privilege has felt increasingly valuable this year as we witness some of the seemingly frequent calamitous events around the world. From the political and societal unrest in the Middle East and the terrorist attacks in Britain, to the natural disasters caused by tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes.

But we also recognise that New Zealand is not necessarily the utopian paradise that we always aspired to be. We are still seeing increasing levels of violence, relationship breakdowns, children who are disadvantaged, damaged, or aren't getting the best start in life, and families that are struggling to cope with the pressures and rigours of everyday living.

For the last two months (seems like forever), this country has been engrossed in the electioneering endeavours of our political aspirants. As we move now towards the formation of a new government for the next three years, it is timely for us to consider again our expectations of our political leadership, our community responsibilities, and our own attitudes and behaviours.

It is clear that the policies and focus of our Government and state agencies have a significant impact on the wellbeing of most New Zealanders. But the issues faced by New Zealand's kids and their families are not just the responsibility of the Government and of the individuals themselves, they are the shared responsibility of all of us - isn't that what it means to be a community?

So what are we doing about it?

The Roy McKenzie Centre for the Study of Families is playing an instrumental role in promoting and conducting research into what makes families resilient and effective, and how the issues such as parenting, family dynamics and family reconstitution can be better understood. The objective is to enable families to be strong in their self-belief and their ability to provide the environment that nurtures their children and provides beneficial life outcomes for all family members. Similarly, the *raison d'être* of Barnardos

New Zealand is to work with children and families to ensure that children can experience a cycle of success through effective care, support and education.

This means providing early childhood care and education, out of school care and holiday programmes, parenting programmes and information resources, family support and welfare services, supervised contact, foster care, and residential care and protection services.

This is achieved through an extensive network of staff and contractors throughout the country who provided services to over 15,000 children and families last year. This comprehensive range of activities is only possible with the support of Government, corporate partners, community and philanthropic organisations, and the ongoing generosity and compassion of the public who actively support our fundraising activities.

There is a commitment in delivering all these child-focused services to strive for best practice in our professional practice standards and ensuring that service design and delivery are underpinned by effective and relevant research.

Barnardos also has a commitment to advocacy on behalf of children, so that the voices of children are heard, the best interests of children are high in the consciousness of policy developers and decision makers, and that families are supported to provide the appropriate foundations and environment for their children. Over recent months our advocacy commitment has been through the "Every Child Counts" campaign which, with some success, has sought to place children in a more prominent place in the political agenda.

Barnardos has a long and distinguished history in New Zealand and internationally. The organisation has changed over time to ensure ongoing relevance in the context of changes in our society. What has not changed is the centrality and value of children and the commitment we share so passionately with the Roy McKenzie Centre.



Parental Separation: recent advances and future directions

The Centre recently held a one-day seminar on 11 July at the National Library of NZ. Key Note speaker Bruce Smyth, Research Fellow at the Australian Institute of Family Studies, opened the presentations. Further presentations were made by Fred W. Seymour, Psychologist; John Te Manihera Chadwick, Family Lawyer; Bill Atkin, Associate Professor in the Faculty of Law at Victoria University; and Jan Pryor, Director of the Roy McKenzie Centre. The seminar was attended by a number of family court lawyers, psychologists, people from government ministries, as well as non government agencies. Sharron Cole, Families Commission Commissioner, chaired the seminar. Topics covered in the presentations were parent-child contact and child support after divorce; post separation issues for Māori families; parent education and early intervention; living apart - unpacking the law; and revisiting living arrangements - what research can tell us in 2005.

PhD Students

Rebecca Graham, our PhD student studying stepfamilies, recently gave a presentation in the Old Government Buildings with the purpose of introducing the topic of her research to interested fellow graduate students and university staff. Rebecca has travelled from Australia to complete her PhD in New Zealand at the Roy McKenzie Centre, and is enjoying the experience. She is currently focusing on developing and selecting measures to use when she begins interviewing families later this year.

Magda Kielpikowski is also working on her PhD involving families and Rozy Pattison and Lucy Reynolds now have placements with clinical psychologists, whilst continuing with their studies.

Connectedness in Youth

In our last (February) issue we reported on establishing three Advisory Groups for Youth, Māori, and Stakeholders; conducting Focus Group and Key Informant interviews; analysing that interview material, developing Survey framework and themes; and the Literature Review work.

Since then the Survey Instrument has been further developed. The 'generic' non-Māori component was tested in a September Pilot 1, while the Māori component is due to be tested in November Pilot No. 2.

November will also see the start of detailed planning for the first Main Survey (March-April 2006), when 1,800 participants will be surveyed in dozens of schools and Community Groups in Wellington and beyond. We'll also be working with our partner agency NZ Council for Educational Research (NZCER) who will be carrying out their part of the Project then, using Digital Storytelling techniques within a narrative theory framework.

Other work of note has included:

- The launch of our Web site
<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/youthconnectedness/>
- Holding Youth Advisory Board meetings to obtain feedback on our draft Survey thinking
- The departure of Health Sciences Research Council from the Project - thank you to Jackie Cumming, Tai Walker, Kirsten Smiler, Maia Bennett, and Sue Buckley for all your work over the last year!
- Beginning recruitment of new staff from NZCER and other sources.
- The departure of Project Manager Chris Holland - thank you, Chris, for your work - and the arrival of Project Coordinator Bill Siddells (introduced elsewhere in this issue)
- The introduction of more robust Project management planning and budgeting processes and documentation.
- Project Stakeholders meeting with extremely valuable feedback and ideas.
- Liaising with The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST), our funding agency.



Conferences

The staff at the Centre have had a busy few months presenting addresses at various conferences.

During July, Jeremy Robertson travelled to the UK to attend the British Criminology Conference in Leeds to deliver a paper on restorative justice. He arrived in London the day of the bombing, fortunately not near the area affected. He also took the opportunity to visit researchers in York, Durham, and London.

Also in July, Jan was a keynote speaker at the Australasian Human Development Association biennial conference in Perth. The topic was Children in Changing Family Structures, and addressed issues arising from family transitions such as separation and stepfamily formation that might be relevant for developmental psychologists.

Jan delivered a further keynote address at the NZ Association of Child and Adolescent Health Services conference in Dunedin.

Jan has also recently been to the UK to give keynote presentations at both Cambridge University, and Cardiff University in Wales.

New Staff

There have been a number of changes at the Centre with Chris Holland returning to Auckland, and Ieti Lima, also returning to Auckland due to family commitments.

Bill Siddells has joined the Centre as Project Co-ordinator. Bill is responsible for overall project coordination, bringing together researchers from three different agencies and over 2,000 project participants.

Bill comes from an extensive background in library/information management. He has previously worked in management positions in The Correspondence School, The Department of Social Welfare (now Ministry of Social Development), and Dunedin Public Libraries. He has also worked as a Business Information Consultant, and Policy Analyst, for the National Library of NZ, as well as a variety of Library/Information positions in the UK. Bill holds post-graduate qualifications in Librarianship and Business Management.

We also welcome Tolotea Lanumata. Tolotea graduated from Victoria University with a B.A. in education and psychology and latterly from the University of Auckland in 2005 with an MA in education. She is currently involved in discussions with the Pacific Island Forum on the research needs of Pacific people.

Vanessa Rogers has come on board for three months to assist Jeremy Robertson with a research project focusing on the impact of Government Policies on families.

