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## Director's Report

Dr Kate van Heugten

Kia ora. Talofa lava. Kia orana.

Happy New Year to you all.

We have continued to pursue a relatively themed approach to this issue of our newsletter and present several main articles that relate to violence that is perpetuated, in the main, against women.

The line up of major articles includes one by Judge Peter Boshier, adapted from a seminar he presented at Te Awatea in September 2006. The Judge's passionate commitment to the elimination of family violence was evident at this well attended session, and again from the paper. After outlining the Family Court's role in the achievement of effective responses to domestic violence, the paper discusses some of the problems currently perceived to exist with the process of issuing protection orders, and with interventions when these are breached. The Taskforce for Action on Violence Within Families has made several pertinent recommendations, including a lowering of the threshold for legal aid eligibility for applications made under the Domestic Violence Act, and an increasing emphasis on appropriate training for advocates to assist them in dealing with traumatised clients. The risks to victims inherent in delayed responses, and the deleterious effects of violence on children and arrangements for their care are also emphasised.

Dr Annabel Taylor follows this with the theme of criminal justice responses to family violence by noting that whilst perpetrators receive mandated assessments that then result in the offering of programmes, there is no such attention to ensuring that victims, who are most likely to be women, have access to services based on a comprehensive assessment of their needs. She advocates for more extensive supportive programmes, including financial support.

Dr Maria Perez-y-Perez then extends the focus to include the experiences of women as victims of violence in a more global context. She reports on the inaugural conference of the Interdisciplinary Research Centre on Family Violence and Violence Against Women (CRI-VIFF), *Violence Against Women: Diversifying Social Responses*, that she attended in Montreal, Canada, in October. The conference drew attention to violence against women as a social problem that must be owned and solved by societies, rather than an individual problem for individual resolution. She will write a paper on her conference presentation, in relation to her research into minimising the risks for sex workers in New Zealand, for the next issue of the *Review*.



*Dr Maria Perez-y-Perez attended the International Conference, Violence Against Women: Diversifying Social Responses, held in Montreal, Canada in October. Her report on the conference can be found on page 15. Maria went back to Canada in December to enjoy the snow. She has been a member of the team at Te Awatea since January 2005.*

Our July seminar presenter was Carolyn Bull, from the Families Commission. Her presentation, *Changes and Changing Attitudes: Getting to Zero Tolerance for Family Violence in Maori and Pakeha families*, also focussed on responses to family violence. She drew attention to traditional Maori approaches to social issues, indicating that these might provide better models for more effectively preventing family violence. The value of such an approach is also highlighted in the overview of the Amokura project, a co-ordinated community response to family violence in Te Tai Tokerau, Northland. Based on the Mauri Ora framework, the project is committed to a programme of effective violence prevention and early intervention strategies.

The theme of attention to victimisation and to the need for support of victims that stretches beyond or aside from legislative interventions is continued by Marie Knight, Chief Executive of Victim Support, as she provides an overview of the range of services available through this national organisation.

Yvonne Crichton-Hill, Nikki Evans, and Letitia Meadows (research assistant) report on the results of a literature review into the phenomenon of young persons who are violent toward their caregivers/parents. The literature and research, in particular New Zealand based, is scant and thus we know as yet too little about the causes and experiences of people who are affected by violence from young persons in their care, nor are we sufficiently informed about appropriate interventions. As Crichton-Hill et al. point out, we do not, at this point in time, understand

if such violence is more properly explored as part of family or of youth violence, but it is recognised that dualistic categorisation is probably overly simplistic in the face of the overriding complexity of the issue. The authors recommend an in-depth qualitative study that would contribute to the filling of these gaps in our knowledge.

The New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse Update draws attention to the extensive electronic resources that have been developed during 2005 and 2006. These include the award winning innovation to "The Library" system that automatically updates the catalogue, and the now accessible *An Agenda for Family Violence Research in New Zealand*. In addition there is now a developing Good Practice Database that provides access to practice guidelines and literature on intervention and prevention programmes. The introduction of list servers available through the Clearinghouse website is one more means of connecting communities of researchers and of practitioners.

Our book review in this issue is of a locally published text, *Will They Do it Again? Assessing and Managing Risk*, edited by Ken McMaster and Leon Bakker. Dr Andrew Frost comments that this book provides a largely balanced approach that canvasses many dilemmas, and succeeds in conveying current thinking about risk-related concepts and providing guidance on application. He predicts that it will receive a large readership.

Again, this issue of *Te Awatea Review* includes several reports on research undertaken by other organisations and we again include

notices about conferences as well as listing useful websites for easy access to government, university, and community organisation-based internet sites.

In February, the team is to hold a planning meeting at which we will review our recent achievements and consider our future directions. As part of this process we will undertake consultation with our readership. In addition we are submitting, and awaiting the outcome of, a number of research grant applications, including a FRST grant proposal (second stage) to research young people's experiences of domestic violence.

In January and February, we will also host a team of two senior social work practitioners and a clinical psychologist from the Social Welfare Department, Hong Kong, who are visiting Christchurch to research physical and sexual violence prevention and intervention programmes in New Zealand.

Thank you to all of you who have supported us, by delivering and attending seminar presentations, and by providing advice and consultation during 2006. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Te Awatea Review*.



# Te Awatea ~ finding solutions

## *moving from darkness into light*

*Te Awatea Review* is published by Te Awatea Violence Research Centre, University of Canterbury.

The *Review* is also available in PDF format on our website: [www.vrc.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.vrc.canterbury.ac.nz)

Design, typesetting and printing by UC Design and UC Print+Copy, University of Canterbury.

The views expressed in *Te Awatea Review* are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of Te Awatea Violence Research Centre.

ISSN 1176-5259