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*Te Awatea Violence Research Centre
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Director's Report

Dr Kate van Heugten

Kia ora. Talofa lava. Kia orana.

It is my pleasure to bring to you the first issue of *Te Awatea Review* for 2006.

In this issue we have pursued a theme with respect to the articles published: that of the sexual abuse of children. It is perhaps fair to say that public attention is currently more attuned to physical rather than sexual violence against children. This may be so because, difficult though it is to grapple with issues of physical violence, sexual violence is beset with even greater taboos against disclosure making it difficult to establish prevalence, as well as impeding co-ordinated approaches to early intervention.

These issues inform the subject matter of two articles, wherein firstly, Karen Dawson writes about our reasons for "keeping trying"

to establish improved co-ordination. Karen also emphasises the overlap between various forms of family violence, and the complexities this creates for service delivery. Anna Chesney provides context by citing New Zealand prevalence related research, as well as research into the effectiveness of local prevention programmes designed to provide children with information that can help them to keep themselves safe from abuse. Dr Andrew Frost, who joined Te Awatea's team in January 2006, brings with him his practical experience and theoretical knowledge of working with perpetrators. His scholarly article that charts recent changes in approaches to such work appears on page 17.

In keeping with the theme, we feature a number of child abuse prevention and intervention services, including the newly



Dr Andrew Frost joined the team at Te Awatea in January 2006 bringing with him 12 years of experience in working with perpetrators of sexual abuse. His article, Working With Men Who Have Sexually Abused Children, can be found on p. 17

renamed Jigsaw, formerly Child Abuse Prevention Services (CAPS), a national collective of child abuse prevention services with which Te Awatea has strong, positive collaboration, which it also has through the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse. Other agencies featured include START and STOP, two organisations that were established in the late 1980s to work with victims and perpetrators of abuse respectively. Having worked with survivors of abuse and their families, and being aware of the long-term lobbying undertaken by professionals to encourage the funding of assistance for whanau and “secondary” survivors of abuse versus individualised “victim” focussed funding, I echo the satisfaction expressed by START in noting that funding has finally been allocated in the 2006 Budget for a two-year pilot programme to cover some of the costs of counselling for non-offending caregivers. Hopefully we can look forward to longer term progress on this front.

With respect to working with perpetrators, over time intervention services offered by STOP have been extended across genders (to encompass female perpetrators) and are reaching younger age groups. An increase in sexually inappropriate behaviour by children toward other children is a trend also noted by START, and we refer back to the article by Chesney who draws on work by Toni Cavanagh Johnson in an attempt to address the sometimes difficult task of distinguishing between normal sexual exploratory behaviour and predatory or inappropriate behaviour by children.

We continue to hold our very popular seminar series, and for those of you who are unable to attend these, our summary of key points made by the speakers can be found on page 23. In

the first half of this year we were delighted to have presentations from two organisations working in the field. One, the Family Help Trust, providing prevention services for families at a high level of risk; the other, the Christchurch Family Safety Team, working towards improved collaboration in providing services for families reported to be experiencing high levels of distress as a result of family violence.

For our Research in Brief, Mike Doolan presents some recent statistics on trends in child homicide which, perhaps contrary to current popular perception, are suggestive of an emerging downward trend (although it is acknowledged that numbers are small with a result that slight changes may skew results).

Our Book Review features the recently published New Zealand book, *Culture and Child Protection: Reflexive Responses*, by Marie Connolly, Yvonne Crichton-Hill and Tony Ward, and is reviewed by Marney Holthouse.

As always, *Te Awatea Review* includes reports on other research, and on violence prevention and intervention initiatives undertaken by a range of organisations. There are notices about international conferences, as well as workshops that may be of particular relevance to practitioners.

We continue to work on the development of peer review processes for *Te Awatea Review*, and we hope to bring you an update on these and their positive implications for contributions in the next issue of the Review.

I would also like to report that the New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse project is progressing very well with the major project of the updating of *An Agenda for Family Violence Research in New Zealand* now completed.

Once it is accessible from the Clearinghouse website (www.nzfvc.org.nz) – which we hope will eventuate before the end of the year - this document will be seen as a living resource, which will be updated and debated into the future. The next major Clearinghouse task relates to the development of a “good practice” database, and, in addition, plans are in process to engage the community of practitioners, researchers, and other interested parties in extensive consultation on future directions for the Clearinghouse.

This community engagement is a furthering of the interests of the team at Te Awatea as we increasingly turn our attention to our community stakeholder connections in order to ensure our research ideas and direction are responsive to practitioner needs, service provision, and policy developments. Of particular interest to us are the gaps in information on some aspects of violence, for example the issue of violence as it affects older people and the impact of violence on adolescents.

We hope you enjoy *Te Awatea Review* and find it informative. One of our visions for the future is to undertake a more formal survey of reader interests and impressions of the newsletter, but we are happy to receive feedback and communications at any time.



Te Awatea ~ finding solutions

moving from darkness into light

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