

## SPRC Newsletter No 56 - March 1995

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**Publication details:**

Working Paper No. No 56

SPRC Newsletter

1324-4639 (ISSN)

**Publication Date:**

1995

**DOI:**

<https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/1057>

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## THE 1995-1997 RESEARCH AGENDA

Approved by the SPRC Management Board in December 1994, the Centre's new Research Agenda sets themes and ideas in place which will guide our research for the next three years. The Centre's Charter and the role of the Research Agenda in shaping the work of the Centre are set out on the next page.

Like other advanced industrial societies, Australia has experienced fundamental changes in economic structure,

This article describes the changes taking place in each of these areas. It then explains how research and other activities in the Centre will be organised for the next three years, and the way in which research will address the social policy concerns in each area of the Centre's program.

### Work

Economic restructuring is having wide-ranging consequences for work, incomes

like other advanced  
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fundamental changes in  
economic structure,  
social behaviour and  
social policy



Above: A recent visit by members of the Norwegian Parliament raised many common concerns in social policy, including the mixed economy of welfare, community care, and ways of financing social support.

social behaviour and social policy. The new SPRC Research Agenda takes some of the most important aspects of social change as its point of departure.

Three areas have been given particular prominence in the direction of development over the next three years. These are: changes in the character and organisation of both paid and unpaid work; changes in the types and levels of inequality in Australian society; and changes in the relationships between the main sectors of social provision including the family and non-government organisations as well as the market and the state.

family life and social policy. Australia is moving towards a 'post-industrial' economy, dependent on services and new information technologies.

Services form an increasing share of activity. In 1971, 40 per cent of Australian workers were in manufacturing and 40 per cent in services. By 1989, manufacturing accounted for only slightly more than a quarter of workers, and services for two thirds.

Most advanced industrial economies have experienced the same development. Micro-economic reform is reducing employment in infrastructure and trans-

port, while public sector and service fields are employment growth areas.

Changes in occupational demand are closely associated with levels of education and skill, and have a particular impact at both the beginning and the end of working life. Part-time, contract and casual jobs have replaced much continuous full-time work, and women are now occupying part-time positions that were once full-time and more often held by men.

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# The Research Charter of the Social Policy Research Centre

**T**he Agreement between the Commonwealth and the University of New South Wales governing the conduct of research and other work of the Social Policy Research Centre specifies six main areas in the study of social policy, needs and priorities for future social policy developments. These areas are

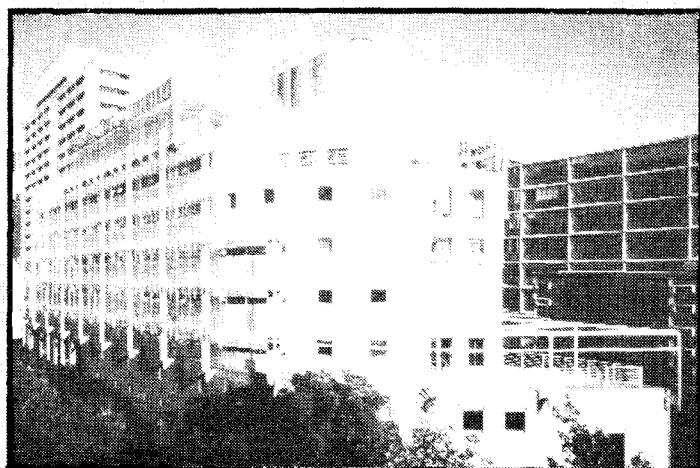
- changes in society which could affect future needs for social services and the capacity of the community to finance them, including demographic and economic changes and changes in ethnic composition, in occupational and spatial patterns and in personal and group life-styles
- methods of providing and administering social services, including service delivery arrangements
- methods of financing social services
- co-ordination of social policies, services and activities
- the effectiveness of social programs, including reviews in the light of changing needs, social and economic conditions and community attitudes and expectations, and
- social welfare aspects of the operation of other programs, whether undertaken by government or by the non-government sector.

In addition, the Agreement specifically requires that research be undertaken in the two major areas of income security, taxation and labour market issues and the provision of community services.

The research context in which the Centre operates has important implications for the research it undertakes. The SPRC cannot do all the social policy research that might be desirable, nor should it attempt to do so. Rather the Centre aims to concentrate its effort and resources on those areas of social policy research in which it has a clear brief and developed strengths (without the latter preventing development of new areas of expertise).

The total research effort of the Centre comprises three elements:

- core research funded from the base grant provided to the Centre
- research specifically commissioned by Department of Social Security (DSS)
- external contract research, including, in recent years, research commissioned by the Department of Human Services and Health (DHS).



In the period 1995-1997 core research is expected to represent about two thirds of the Centre's total research effort, research commissioned by DSS one sixth and external contract research (including research commissioned by DHS) one sixth. The Research Agenda for 1995-97 applies to the total research effort of the Centre, though the specific projects fore-shadowed in it relate only to the first of these elements.

In defining the core research program, the Research Agenda frames the environment of research interests, conceptual development and resource allocation of the Centre as a whole. Thus it also has a vital relation to contract and commissioned research in the Centre. The orientation of the Research Agenda helps to guide the selection of research projects to be undertaken on commission or contract. At the same time, consideration of research proposals originating outside the Centre provides an important check on the Research Agenda and its relevance to developments in social needs and policy operation. The Research Agenda must be flexible, providing guidance without being unduly prescriptive.

While the conduct of research is the main activity of the SPRC, its charter also includes activities fostering discussion and training in social policy. The Centre has active seminar and conference programs directed to both expert and community audiences. It also supports postgraduate study in social policy, primarily through its provision of scholarships for PhD research in the Centre. The Research Agenda shapes the climate in which these activities are carried out, and its themes are reflected in their character.

As central wage fixation is replaced by enterprise bargaining, we can expect those trends to accelerate.

Work is also changing because more people are seeking greater access to paid work. This includes not only married women and sole parents, but also older workers and people with disabilities. The two-earner household is increasingly the norm. The long-term exclusion of some groups from employment — by age, language, poor qualifications and regional disadvantage — raises concerns about the perpetuation of poverty from one generation to the next.

### **employment is about the quality as well as the quantity of jobs available**

High levels and long duration of unemployment are likely to continue, as well as high rates of underemployment and hidden unemployment. These effects are being felt in concentrated form in regions of Australia where employment historically depended on heavy industry.

Employment is about the quality as well as the quantity of jobs available. Many new jobs are poorly paid, insecure and part-time. As such, access to employment, the emergence of a new 'working poor' and the effectiveness of the welfare safety net represent further key social policy concerns.

Policies and programs have to respond to the effects of changing employment patterns on marriage, parenthood and family life. Changes in employment affect the relation between paid and unpaid work in the care of young pre-school children, the frail elderly and people with disabilities, and more generally in social care in the family and community.

### **Inequality**

Inequalities of income grew during the 1980s in Australia and many other countries. They grew among households generally, but the relative positions of social groups such as women, Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander people, ethnic groups and the residents of urban and regional areas also give cause for concern.

Although the complex patterns of these changes are still to be fully explored, important factors include changes in the structure of work and labour market participation, the increasing predominance of the dual-income couple, tighter targeting and other changes in income security, and the rapid spread of superannuation.

Studies such as the recently-completed *Study of Social and Economic Inequalities* have examined the role of fringe benefits and non-cash income in health, education and social services in living standards. New data enable further exploration of inequality in patterns of time use, both within the household and as a wider measure of comparative well-being.

Qualitative changes in and increasing levels of social inequality mean we have to think about the meaning, measurement and extent of poverty. What is the appropriate unit for income distribution and poverty measurement? Households and families now take a variety of forms, and cash income has its limitations as the basis of assessing the adequacy of living standards.

Australia's population is ageing. This has its most pronounced effects in the oldest age groups, but a less widely recognised effect is in the greater longevity of groups with severe disabilities. This is putting family members under even greater pressure to provide care within and between generations.

These same families are experiencing profound changes on other fronts. Rising levels of workforce participation among married women, divorce and re-marriage as common experience, and a diversity of family forms invite us to re-examine ideas about gender, marriage and the life course generally.

### **Welfare State Structure**

Child care, emergency and ongoing low-cost accommodation, and services for people with disabilities of all kinds are examples of new and more pressing so-

cial needs. At the same time, political reactions against rising social expenditure, heightened concerns about the effectiveness of welfare programs, and an ideological climate of 'economic rationalism' have put established social welfare

### **family members are under even greater pressure to provide care within and between generations**

programs in question. One consequence of these trends is the emergence of a 'mixed economy of welfare' in which families and non-government organisations are expected to play increasing roles.

Social security reforms since the late 1980s have been underpinned by the idea that social policy should be properly integrated with and contribute to economic policy. This is quite a departure from the social policy frameworks inherited from the post-war period, and embodies the principles of the 'Active Society'.

Developed under the auspices of the OECD, the Active Society has the goal of policy fostering closer integration of pub-



Above, from left to right: Research Assistants Marina Paxman and Marilyn McHugh and Deputy Director Sheila Shaver

lic and private responsibility in social protection. The *Working Nation* initiatives and recent community service policies at both Commonwealth and State levels are of this kind.

Not all of the motivations for change have been economic. The move toward a 'mixed economy of welfare' also reflects

changing social expectations about the importance of the individual and the nature and appropriate limits of social provision. Values associated with the 'right', such as freedom, choice and self-help, have converged to a degree with concepts of the liberal 'left', such as independence and community. Valuation of the individual is also reflected in new appreciations of privatisation and the rights of services users as consumers.

A role for private welfare initiatives is not new: Australian welfare arrangements have always allowed a substantial role to the market, and featured a large non-government sector substantially dependent on public funds. Increasingly, however, policy has begun to address the relative roles of public and private providers, and to increase the scope of markets, households and non-government organisations in service provision.

**we are mapping out  
directions, aware  
that it would be  
counterproductive to  
fix the content of  
projects in any Area too  
far in advance**

This trend is well advanced in support for private retirement saving through superannuation, and for individuals kept out of the labour force by the need to care for others. Further examples are found in de-institutionalisation in the care of the mentally ill, children in care, people with disabilities and the frail aged.

Mixed economy values are also reflected in privatisation, including the sale or corporatisation of government enterprises, the contracting out of services, user-pays pricing for public services and policies encouraging the use of the labour of unpaid volunteers.

### **The Research Agenda for 1995-1997**

The theme of social change underpins the SPRC Research Agenda for the next three years. Research will be under-

taken in the five following Areas of social policy study:

- work, employment and socioeconomic change
- economic and social inequality
- the mixed economy of welfare
- income security, taxation and labour market policies and programs
- community services policies and programs.

The five Areas are not necessarily intended to be of the same size or as commanding the same levels of research resources. They are intended as focal areas and not as fields of subject matter having discrete boundaries. It will often be appropriate (and indeed desirable) for particular studies to deal with issues or two or more of these Areas.

**Australian welfare  
arrangements have  
always allowed a  
substantial role  
to the market**

Program-specific research on income security and community services will complement research in the first three Areas. The Areas chosen represent both the subject matter of much comparative and evaluative research in social policy and the functional concerns of the two main Commonwealth government departments in the field of the Centre's charter.

## **Possible New Projects on Work, Employment and Socio-economic Change**

### **The Changing Nature and Distribution of Work**

This project is to describe recent and anticipated changes in paid and unpaid work and undertake a survey of the implications of these changes for a range of project areas. It will build on current work in *The Rise of the Two-earner Couple*.

#### **Low Pay**

This project will examine the implications of greater earnings inequality for tax and transfer policies. Two of two main considerations are the implications of declining low wages for established transfer policies, and the feasibility of tax or transfer policies being used to offset their distributional impacts. Empirical work will include cross-national comparisons of policies and their outcomes to assist the working poor, and considerations of how to best measure poverty among self-employed workers.

### **The Costs of Job Search and the Costs of Working**

How much does it cost to search for work, and what can be reasonably described as the unavoidable costs of employment? These related questions are relevant to the setting of equitable income support payments for people searching for work, and for the measurement of poverty and living conditions generally for working people.

### **Welfare Sector Employment in the Post-industrial Economy**

This project would review the basis and conditions of employment in the welfare sector, both comparatively across levels and types of work and as between government and non-government employers, and historically in the development of trends over the past two decades or so.

The research will be concerned with establishing the extent to which work in social welfare has been affected by movements toward 'post-industrial' forms of employment, including increased flexibility in functions and supervision, multi-skilling and the use of part-time and casual employment.



# Ronald Henderson

BY PETER SAUNDERS

**T**he death of Ronald Henderson on 28 December 1994 is a sad blow. He will be missed by everyone with an interest in Australian social research and all who champion the causes of the disadvantaged. The issues he canvassed in his writings continue to dominate social policy debates in this country, probably more so now than when he was grappling with them three decades ago. His loss does not signal the passing of an era; the issues he addressed and the legacy of his work will stretch far into the future.

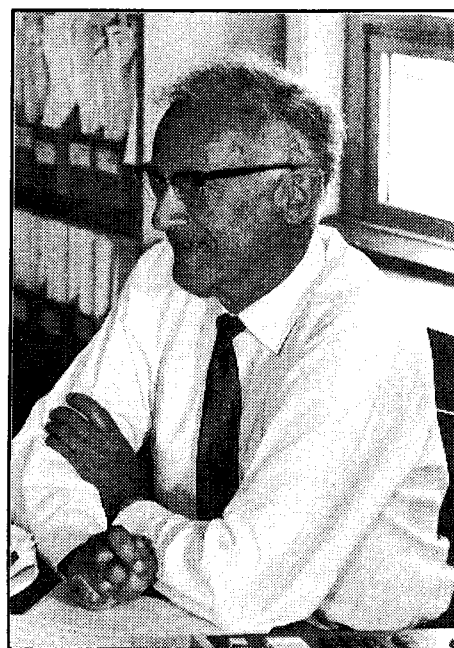
He will be best remembered for his pioneering research on poverty, undertaken first with his colleagues at the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research (IAESR) at the University of Melbourne and later as the head of the Poverty Commission. Development of that body of research, for which Ronald was largely responsible, took an enormous intellectual and physical effort (there were few survey research companies and no word processors then, and computing facilities were primitive by today's standards).

Today's arguments over the minutiae of the poverty line miss the fundamental

point - emphasised in the Preface to all of the Commission Reports - that the elimination of poverty requires tackling the patterns of 'structural inequality within society' which produce and reproduce poverty from generation to generation.

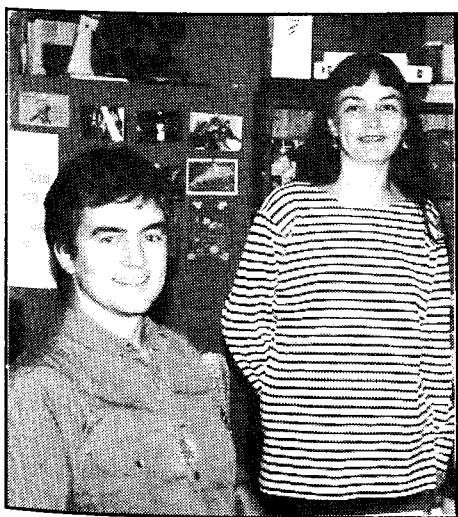
Yet his achievements extend far beyond those associated with his research on poverty. He took an active interest in many areas of applied economics and under his leadership the Institute achieved a blending of the economic and social aspects of public policy which resulted in a balanced, topical and effective program of research and that rarest of all achievements, the establishment of a collegiate, multidisciplinary and mutually supportive intellectual environment.

One of the many recommendations of the Poverty Commission was that a National Social Research Institute be established to conduct systematic and continuous research designed to improve social policies at all levels of government. This recommendation received Ronald's strong personal support and reflected his appreciation of the value of independent research. It was acted on some years later with the establishment of this Centre in 1980. The principles espoused for the proposed Institute - prompt publication and wide dissemination of research results, and a close but critical relation with



government departments and agencies - have guided our work for the last fifteen years.

I did not know Ronald Henderson very well personally, but the few times that I had the pleasure of meeting him remain vivid in my memory. He continues to be an inspiration to me in my own work, not only for his intellectual honesty, openness and professionalism, but also for his good nature, and above all for the genuineness of his commitment to make Australia a fairer society and thus a better nation.



Above: Senior Research Fellow Bruce Bradbury and Research Assistant Jenny Doyle

Projects proposed at this stage are preliminary. We are mapping out directions, aware that it would be counterproductive to fix the project content of any Area too far in advance.

## Research Area One: Employment and Socio-economic Change

This research will be concerned with the social policy issues raised by structural changes in the Australian and world economies and their consequences for paid (market-based) and unpaid (domestic and volunteer) labour.

Of critical concern is the level and distribution of employment likely to be available in a 'post-industrial' future. What determines access to paid work and what

are the factors affecting the flows into and out of the paid workforce?

Increasing 'dualisation' of the labour market into either casual, low-paid jobs and full-time, high-paid jobs will very likely lead to increases in wage inequality, part-time and casual employment, and unemployment. These increases can be expected to have differential effects with respect to age, education, ethnicity, gender and family composition.

Changes in the nature of work have implications for social policy in two main areas. The first is the increased commodification of caring work, through both state and market. Most caring work still takes place in the household, and for financial reasons governments are keen

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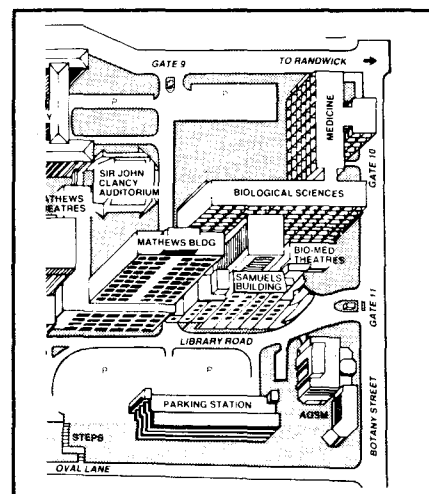
The Social Policy Research Centre (originally the Social Welfare Research Centre) was established in January 1980 under an agreement between the University of New South Wales and the Commonwealth Government.

The Centre is operated by the University as an independent unit of the University. The Director receives assistance in formulating the Centre's research agenda from a Board of Management, and in periodic consultation with the community. The Director of the Centre is responsible to the Vice-Chancellor for the operation of the Centre.

The Centre undertakes and sponsors research on important aspects of social policy and social welfare; it arranges seminars and conferences, publishes the results of its research in reports, journal articles and books, and provides opportunities for postgraduate studies in social policy. The Centre's current Research Agenda covers social policy issues associated with changes in work and employment; levels of social and economic inequality including poverty and the measurement of income and living standards; the changing structure of the mixed economy of welfare and the roles of state, market, household and non-government sectors in meeting social needs; in policies and programs in social security, taxation and the labour market, and in community services policies and programs.

The views expressed in this Newsletter, as in any of the Centre's publications, do not represent any official position of the Centre. The Newsletter and all other SPRC publications present the views and research findings of the individual authors with the aim of promoting the development of ideas and discussion about major concerns in social policy and social welfare.

The Social Policy Research Centre is located on Level 3 of the Samuels Building, University of NSW, Kensington Campus. Enter by Gate 11, Botany Street.



# FROM THE DIRECTOR

S O C I A L P O L I C Y R E S E A R C H C E N T R E

**T**he early months of each year seem to slip by with unnerving ease. It seems like only a few weeks since last year's pre-Christmas celebrations, yet we are already almost quarter of the way through a new year, and the issues and challenges that go with it. Whatever happened to that period in between, set aside (as last year, and the year before that) for catching up on correspondence and all those other tasks which remain hidden on the back of one's mind or gathering dust, at the bottom of the in-tray?

At the national level, 1995 looks set for a vigorous (though perhaps not invigorating) political and economic debate. The economic doom-merchants have already descended to pick at the carcass of economic recovery, warning us that our economic problems in recovery are as bad, if not worse, than they were in the dark recessionary days of 1991 and 1992. The die is being cast for a 'horror budget' - you know, the one which turns out to be nowhere near as bad as all the media leaks had led us to believe, but nonetheless worse than we would have hoped for before the leaks began. The brevity of the Australian electoral term means that (as always) a federal election is never far away, another factor adding political spice to the economy pot which is bubbling away.

The current situation has all the classic ingredients of the 'stop-go' cycle which has served our long-run economic interests so badly in the past. Most agree that we need to lift our sights and take a more mature and focused look at our longer-term (structural) problems and prospects. Even if one accepts the need to reduce the budget deficit this year, the policies adopted do not have to compromise longer-run objectives. Nor should they. The key to our economic future lies in securing adequate investment in both physical capital and human capital, in raising the quality of our infrastructure at all levels, from buildings and roads to power and communications. Most of all, it means investing in human potential - in people. Yet as soon as the macro-economic warning bells sound, the budget-cutters prepare lists of what to cut which include the very programs through which government achieves these objectives.

If cuts have to be made on the expenditure side, they should conform with the economic problems they are intended to address. This involves thinking of what temporary measures could alleviate our temporary problems whilst not compromising on those programs directed to the longer-term. Above all, we need to bring the tax question into the picture and ask whether a rise in taxes, coupled with adjustment to the tax structure, should not also bear some of the adjustment. Being at the bottom of the OECD tax league table is not, in itself, an achievement of any note. What matters is what we have gained as a nation from our low taxes. If making that case is difficult, perhaps we need to ask instead why every other OECD government has seen fit to impose a higher tax burden on their citizens than we have here in Australia.

1995 also promises to be a milestone for the Centre. It represents both the beginning of a new five-year Agreement with the Commonwealth Government and the introduction of a new triennial Research Agenda (described elsewhere in this Newsletter). It is an important year for us, as we begin to develop new research topics and continue the process of orientating our research to give it a more forward-looking perspective - identifying and analysing new issues rather than dissecting and discussing old ones, or at least giving a modern context and slant to the discussion of issues which have been with us for some time.

## STAFF

Unfortunately, two of our most valued researchers will not be here to play their part in developing our new Agenda. Both have played a major role in establishing the

reputation of the Centre and in setting us on our current path.

■ Peter Whiteford joined the Centre in 1986 and since then has developed a national and international reputation for his work on social security, needs and living standards. He left the Centre at the end of 1994 to join the staff of the Minister for Social Security, Peter Baldwin.

■ Anthony King has been at the Centre for four years, working on social security issues, housing, policies for young people, poverty, immigration and income distribution. Anthony is leaving to accept a senior position at the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra.

■ I have worked extensively with both Peter and Anthony and know all too well how much we will miss them. They have both contributed greatly to the work of the Centre and to my own intellectual development. We wish them well in their new careers.

■ Similar wishes are extended to Gloria Gervasoni, who also departed from the Centre at the end of 1994.

■ Michael Fine has been reclassified to the position of Senior Research Fellow. From this year on, Michael will play a major role in developing new research on the mixed economy of welfare.

■ I am pleased to welcome Sue Koenig to the Centre as a part-time research assistant, and Amanda Elliot, who has been awarded the SPRC Postgraduate Scholarship for 1995. Amanda graduated from Flinders University last year, where she was awarded the University Medal. She plans to undertake research on women and citizenship.

Peter Saunders  
Director



# NEW PUBLICATIONS

S O C I A L P O L I C Y R E S E A R C H C E N T R E

## **The Use of Replacement Rates in International Comparisons of Benefit Systems**

PETER WHITEFORD

SPRC Discussion Paper No.54

Comparative studies of social security systems have increasingly used replacement rates as measures of the level of benefits and degree of social protection afforded by different welfare systems. The rationale of this is that replacement rates provide consistent measures of the relative generosity of payments and therefore indicate the 'quality' of social security systems.

Using replacement rates to compare the generosity of retirement pensions, the paper argues that they are not necessarily reliable as such measures. This reflects a number of factors, including incomplete measurement of benefit packages and differences in what must be bought out of disposable incomes.

Most importantly, the paper suggests that the level of earnings in different countries are not independent of the processes of redistribution.

## **Dependency, the Life Course and Social Policy**

SARA GRAHAM (ED.)

SPRC Reports and Proceedings No.118

This report contains the proceedings of a one day seminar, 'Dependency, the Life Course and Social Policy', held at the Social Policy Research Centre on 23 September 1994.

Diane Gibson discusses the concept of dependency and goes on to ask the question: what exactly is it about dependency that gives it such a negative aura?

Anne Edwards looks at the social construction of the category 'youth', examining the social status and other cir-

cumstances which impinge on their dependence and independence.

Bruce Bradbury deals specifically with the ways in which the social security and taxation systems treat the relationships of dependency and interdependency within the family.

Sol Encel discusses age dependency, the over-emphasis on age dependency ratios and the neglect of the contribution to society of older people, and aspects of the treatment of age in the media.

Cherry Russell is also concerned with the 'construction' of dependency for older people and examines research in the area. Sheila Shaver reviews the five papers and locates the concept of dependency in a context of individuation and individualism within the welfare state.

## **The Institutional Population of Australia: 1976-1991 Report of a Feasibility Study**

MICHAEL FINE, SARA GRAHAM  
AND GEORGE MATHESON

SPRC Reports and Proceedings No. 119

Welfare programs for particular groups in Australian society have changed dramatically since the 1970s when the policy of de-institutionalisation for the mentally ill was first considered. Since then there has been an increased use of community care programs for the elderly and people with disabilities, combined with diversion pro-

grams for those taken into custody.

Yet despite these developments, those living in institutions are often excluded from sample surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and other agencies.

This study, commissioned by the Department of Human Services and Health looks at available data on the population remaining in institutions.

This report provides a statistical basis for researchers who have an interest in assessing the direct and indirect effects of policy changes relating to the institutional population.

## **Forthcoming**

**Social Policy and Northern Australia: National Policies and Local Issues**  
**Proceedings of a One Day Conference, Friday 28 October 1994, Darwin**

PETER SAUNDERS (ED.)

SPRC Reports and Proceedings No. 120

Sponsored by the Centre for Social Research at Northern Territory University, and the Social Policy Research Centre, this conference featured papers on welfare and inequality, social welfare, and policies for the aged and those with mental disabilities. Special attention was given to the unique social, cultural and economic landscape

## **SPRC Subscription Series**

The eighth SPRC Subscription series begins with *Reports and Proceedings* Number 120. It runs for 15 publications and includes the *Research Resource Series*, starting from Number 12.

Libraries and other interested organisations and individuals are encouraged to take out a subscription. As we publish irregularly, it is good way of ensuring you receive issues close to publishing date instead of waiting to order through the *SPRC Newsletter*.

The eighth subscription series costs \$120 (\$15 less than buying issues separately) and includes postage by surface mail. Order using the form opposite.

of Northern Australia.

The papers featured in this volume are:

Peter Saunders, *Welfare and Inequality in Australia in the 1990s*

Bill Tyler, *Constructing Indicators for Social Inequality for Northern Australia*

Anthony King, *Innovation and Change in Long Term Care: The Challenges of New Models*

Rebecca Orr, *Community Care and Accommodation Models for those People Suffering from Mental Illness*

Note: Those who have already ordered and/or paid need not re-order. The volume will be sent directly to you.

## Forthcoming

### Three Years at Home: The Final Report of the Longitudinal Study of Community Support Services and Their Users

MICHAEL FINE AND  
CATHY THOMSON

SPRC Reports and Proceedings No. 121

The introduction of community support policies in recent years has undoubtedly already changed the lives of tens of thousands of people. In the coming decades it is likely, either directly or indirectly, to affect virtually every Australian family.

*Three Years at Home* presents the results of a detailed three-year study of community support in a suburban community.

The report examines the need for help at home among a group of 60 predominantly older people. It reports on the outcomes of the support provided to these people over the three years and documents the assistance given by formal services and unpaid family members.

After three years less than half of the original participants were still at home, the majority having been admitted to nursing homes. This sheds considerable doubt on the capacity of support at home to replace care provided in residential institutions, and also raises questions about the capacity of existing services to meet needs.

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- ☐ No. 118, Sara Graham (ed.), **Dependency, The Life Course and Social Policy**, January 1995, 120pp. \$9
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- ☐ No. 120, Peter Saunders (ed.), **Social Policy and Northern Australia, Proceedings of a One Day Conference, Darwin, April 1995**, 124 pp. \$9
- ☐ No. 121, Michael Fine and Cathy Thomson, **Three Years at Home: The Final Report of the Longitudinal Study of Community Support Services and Their Users**, April 1995, 205pp, \$9

## DISCUSSION PAPERS

- ☐ No. 54, Peter Whiteford, **The Use of Replacement Rates in International Comparisons of Benefit Systems**, February 1995, 48pp. Free

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# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

S P R C N E W S L E T T E R

Dear Editor,

We write regarding the cover article 'Looking to the Summit - And Beyond' by Peter Saunders in the December 1994 edition of the SPRC Newsletter. We understand the impact that an event like the Bandung seminar can have on participants, and indeed the Copenhagen summit should be anticipated with expectations for improved social development strategies. However, the context and tone of some of Dr Saunders' interpretations of global developments post 1989 require a response.

We do not understand how a respected academic can have such an apparently shallow understanding of the history of political ideas and the changes that have taken place in the world following the Cold War. Having been impressed by his books on social policy in Australia we are more than surprised at this article. In particular Dr Saunders' interpretation of post-industrial development and the 'peace dividend' cannot be accepted uncritically. His comments stand out from the general thrust of his argument as gross over-simplifications.

To suggest that simply because the direct ownership and control of the means of production has failed as a strategy for combining prosperity, freedom and equality we all become enthusiastic capitalists must surely be taken as tongue in cheek. Even the most ardent supporters of free market/capitalist ideology fail to make a case that capitalism has much to contribute towards the achievement of greater equality. Indeed, a writer such as Milton Friedman positively believes that it is the creation of inequality through capitalism which creates incentives for people to work harder resulting in a more productive 'efficient' economy.

When Dr Saunders' enjoins us to all become 'true believers' in the capitalist creed, he seems to ignore that there are many in eastern and central Europe who have - given the change in open and democratic elements - voted for reformed parties from the left. Only on December 18 1994 the Bulgarian Socialist Party

retained power, winning a wider than expected margin and gaining an outright parliamentary majority.

Much of eastern Europe is having to come to terms with an economic, social and environmental legacy from communism which is hard to conceive. Communism destroyed political cultures, legal systems and left their industrial and service sectors in a state of complete chaos. The early years following the events of 1989 saw horrendous mistakes with the 'free' market policies espoused by certain western advisers being imposed on countries without developed financial or labour markets, let alone proper legal and



social security systems. This has produced great social and economic distress with little to show for it.

But criticising such 'shock therapy' is easier than developing a viable alternative economic and social programme; this alternative can be developed but is less than assisted by assertions that it is capitalism which has all the answers.

Dr Saunders then enters the realm of fantasy to talk about the so-called 'peace dividend'. Quite where he gets his impression of an 'outbreak of peace' from escapes us. The last four years have seen the Gulf War and the first major war on the European mainland since the end of World War II. The Gulf War continues today in the form of sanctions against Iraq. One need look no further than the UN for reports on the damage in terms of poverty and infant mortality that this 'war

by other means' creates for the Iraqi people. The break up of Yugoslavia has seen the first concentration camps since the forties and the systematic 'cleansing' of peoples through the murder of thousands of Muslim Croats, Bosnians and Serbs. 1994 saw between 500 000 and one million people killed in Rwanda.

The conclusion to Dr Saunders' article gives us at least some hope that this 'true believer' understand more than his remarks about the potential of capitalism and his so-called 'outbreak of peace' would suggest. It is indeed a long road to achieve 'human' development. There are all too many examples in Australia in the form of the granting of woodchip licences and the building of third runways, where maximising profit overrides the consideration of social and economic impacts.

Shifting the emphasis by replacing the word 'economic' with 'human' in discussing the idea of development may be a major advance in the realm of UN global conferences. However, does Dr Saunders really believe that this will make a difference in the manner in which multi-national companies view the 'potential' in Third World and other markets? Does he really believe that they have an interest in the achievement of freedom and equality along with their own prosperity?

There may be some 'trickle-down' effect from the Copenhagen summit, as there may also be from the human development index. However, the problem is - just as we see in the economic sphere - the benefits can be a long time coming to those who need them most. Reassurances stemming from a belief in the inevitability of capitalist solutions and the sharing of the debatably significant 'peace dividend' simplify the situation too much and obscure a potentially wider and more fundamental debate as to how solutions to these major problems might realistically be found.

Yours sincerely,  
Gary Moore  
Alan Owen  
Nicholas Rowley

to see the maintenance of this through voluntary work and the re-organisation of publicly funded caring. By studying changes in the nature of paid caring work over time, we will be able to determine how effective such policies are.

The second concern is that the commodification of caring work has been contemporaneous with the rise in women's labour force participation. The im-

plications of this for income support and taxation policies will continue to be a major focus of SPRC research. This research will be extended to consider the implications of growing wage inequality for tax and transfer policies.

We would also like to examine the costs of job search and of working. An understanding of the latter in particular is important for the establishment of equitable policies to assist low-wage workers and their families.

## Possible New Projects on Economic and Social Inequality

### Income and Well-being in Old Age: A Comparative Study

Comparative research using the Luxembourg Income Study database shows the economic status of the aged in Australia to be relatively low by international standards. However, such analyses ignore several factors which contribute to well-being and are of particular significance in Australia. These include the growing importance of earnings-related benefits, primarily occupational superannuation, imputed income from owner-occupied housing, imputed pension rights and ownership of other forms of wealth. The project will address the conceptual issues involved in developing broader measures of well-being and inequality which encompass these dimensions, and use the LIS database to illustrate their impact on cross-national comparisons.

### Locational Disadvantage in Australia

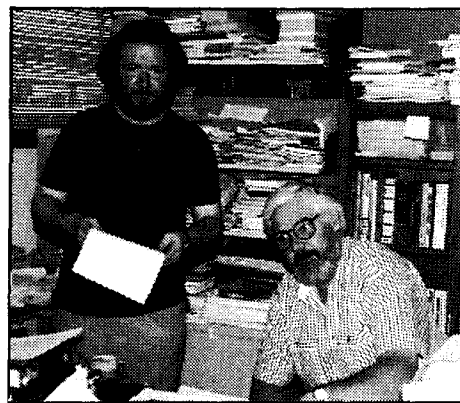
How do living standards and poverty vary across the regions of Australia? This project will draw upon data from the Census, special ABS tabulations and administrative data sources to describe locational dimensions of trends and levels of poverty and living standards. Conventional income-based measures will be examined, along with measures of transport and housing costs, and indices of intergenerational disadvantage.

### Income Distribution and Health Status

The National Health Strategy has addressed some of this area, although only using aggregate data. A Public Health Research and Development Committee Small Grant in 1994 funded the purchasing of the unit record file from the 1989 *National Health Survey* and the matching of it with the 1990 *Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities*. The integrated data set will form the basis of detailed analysis of the relationships between incomes and associated socio-economic variables and health status and inequalities in access to health and medical services.

### Income Dynamics and Income Mobility

What can existing longitudinal data reveal about the frequency of movements into and out of poverty by Australian families? How might existing administrative data be developed and used to highlight these issues, and at what cost? This project will explore options for conducting follow-up interviews with respondents of previous SPRC surveys, to see whether these can provide any supplementary information on movements over time in income, labour market and family status.



Above: Senior Research Assistant George Matheson (left) and SPRC Director Peter Saunders

## Research Area Two: Economic and Social Inequality

This Area of study will continue SPRC work on poverty, inequality and standards of living, and will also carry forward the research program of the *Study of Social and Economic Inequalities*. Established conceptual and methodological frameworks will be further developed for the analysis of inequality.

Research in this area will be in three main dimensions. The first will continue past SPRC research **monitoring trends** in poverty and inequality, based on direct analysis of the unit record data produced from the 1992-93 *Household Expenditure Survey* and the forthcoming *Survey of Income and Housing Costs and Amenities*. This work will address the concepts and methodologies underlying the measurement of income distribution and poverty.

The second will be research into the **causes and consequences** of inequality and poverty. Material disadvantage translates into broader and more permanent problems of social exclusion, isolation and aberrant behaviour.

The third dimension is **comparative research** on measures of living standards and their distribution. Existing research

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based on the Luxembourg Income Study will be extended to encompass broader measures of well-being than those based solely on money income.

Several projects already underway in this Area will be carried forward into the new Research Agenda.

The project **Monitoring Trends in Income Distribution and Redistribution** will continue to study the broader economic, labour market, demographic and policy context. Specific attention

will be given to disaggregating these trends into the relative contribution of different factors and on exploring the underlying conceptual and methodological issues. Recent work on developments in income distribution since the mid-1970s will contribute to this project.

The main aim of continuing research on **The Estimation of Consumer Equivalence Scales and Their Role in Research on Poverty and Inequality** is to derive estimates of relative need which

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between labour market  
activity and poverty status**

can be used in other research and form the basis for policy evaluation exercises. A range of different approaches and data sources will be employed in the research, so that the sensitivity of the equivalence scale to the data and methods used to derive it can also be assessed.

Stage II of the study of **The Measurement and Causes of Poverty** will continue SPRC research documenting trends in poverty and how sensitive these are to the methods used to measure poverty.

Researchers will consider the causes of poverty, particularly on the links between labour market activity and poverty status. This will provide a natural link to other projects on low wages, ageing and caring responsibilities and how these affect the risk of poverty. A consideration of issues concerning poverty and the self-employed will also feature in the research.

### **Research Area Three: The Mixed Economy of Welfare**

This Area will be concerned with the public-private mix in social welfare and the way in which the Australian mixed economy of welfare links governments,

## **Possible New Projects on the Mixed Economy of Welfare**

### **The Changing Nexus of Public and Private Provision in Welfare**

This project will survey changes in the roles of public and private provision and in the modes of integration between them over the post-war period. There will be a particular emphasis on developments taking place over the last twenty years.

### **The Mixed Economy of Social Support for the Aged**

The object of this project is to develop a composite portrait of the mixed economy of welfare as it operates in the provision of social support for the aged. Drawing on existing research studies wherever possible, the research will identify the contributions of public providers (at all levels of government), non-government organisations, family-based provision and market services. Attempts will be made to estimate the scale of activity in each sector, map the linkages between them (including the funding of non-government organisations), and identify changes in both.

The main components of social support to be considered are employment and income; housing and accommodation including 'retirement village' and nursing home accommodation; and personal care services.

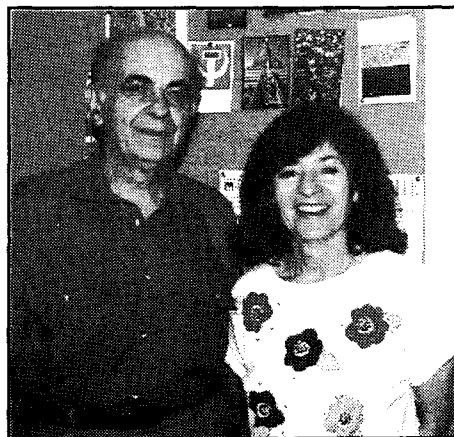
This project will build on historical research, studies of key organisations, micro studies of aged persons and services (including those undertaken by SPRC), and research on professionalisation, medicalisation and politicisation in the way the support needs of the aged are understood.

Wherever possible, we intend to complement the macro view of the mixed economy with research sources presenting the views of those experiencing social support under the varying auspices of state, non-government, family and market.

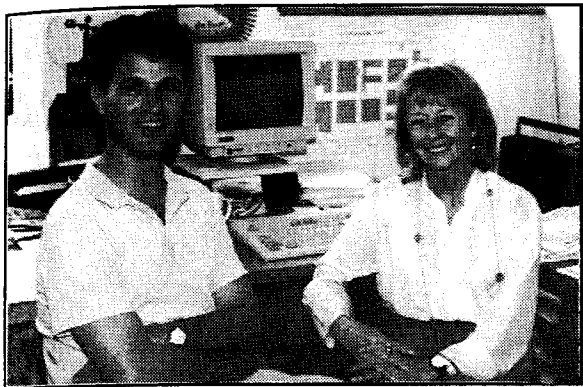
### **Social Stratification, Social Change and Attitudes to State and Private Welfare**

This project will investigate public opinion regarding the state, market, family and non-government sectors as auspices for social provision. The policy relevance of such attitudes can be seen in areas ranging from the incidence of claims to social rights (e.g. pension take-up rates) through to the responses of political elites to perceived popular sentiment.

Attention will be given to attitudinal differences associated with social class, gender and ethnicity, as well as the extent to which recent changes in society and policy have been reflected in popular thinking. There will be particular emphasis on the attitudes of aged people and on attitudes towards provision for the aged.



Above: Honorary Research Associate Sol Encel and Research Assistant Helen Studencki



Above: Senior Research Fellow Michael Fine and Centre Administrator Suzanne Vaughan

markets, households and non-government organisations. It is an evolutionary development of the Centre's previous Research Agenda Area of Citizenship, Social Rights and the Structure of the Welfare State. Another previous Research Agenda Area, Community Support Services, also raised many questions about the present roles and funding relations of state and federal governments and the integration of public and private care.

The objective of studies of the mixed economy of welfare will be to explore variations in the balance of public and private provision across different areas of service and support. The research will need to take account of regional and ethnic differences in the development of social care, how they affect needs, and whether these needs are met through funding, provision and management of services.

A project on the **Changing Nexus of Public and Private Provision in Welfare** will provide an overview of the mixed economy of welfare in Australia.

Other projects in this Area will take the social support of the aged as a common theme. This theme has been chosen for several reasons. Historically, trends emerging in this field have later been generalised to others in the welfare state.

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Given the coincidence of demographic expansion of aged support needs with political pressures to reduce social expenditure, outcomes for aged policy will be valuable indicators for the future. Research will highlight the role of voluntary and philanthropic activity in the circumstances and social participation of the aged. The rich supply of literature and

SPRC expertise in this field makes it an appropriate area for synthesising work required to link state, market, non-government and household sectors.

Two existing SPRC projects will be carried forward into 1995-1997. The project **Universality and Selectivity in Income Support: An Assessment of the Issues** comprises a review of the arguments in favour of a universal as opposed to a selective (means-tested) approach to income support.

The arguments will be examined in both Australian and international comparative perspectives, and in the light of present income support to persons aged 65 and over in Australia, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, including incomes from both public income support programs and private sources such as superannuation.

**Planning Retirement Income** is a study of the expectations, plans and perceptions of entitlement to public support held by middle-aged Australians concerning their income in retirement.

The research will investigate class differences in expectations of various forms of retirement saving supported from the public purse, including future eligibility for the age pension, current savings practices (including saving through home purchase), superannuation and other assets, and the use of tax concessions for retirement saving. The project combines secondary analysis of quantitative data sources with a small qualitative fieldwork study.

## Research Area Four: Income Security, Taxation and Labour Market Policies and Programs

This Area of research will look closely at particular policies and programs which have a bearing on incomes. 'Income' includes private income; gross income; disposable income; full income (incorporating some definition of income in kind); discretionary income; and real, as compared to nominal, income.

the 1994 White Paper,  
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for work in this Area

This part of the Research Agenda covers a broad area, though the emphasis will be on policies and programs in the areas of income support, taxation and the labour market. For this reason there will be a strong link to more basic research outlined under the Area of Work, Employment and Socio-economic Change.

The May 1994 White Paper on Employment and Growth, *Working Nation*, will be one obvious focus for work in this Area. Projects will have to consider income support and labour market issues simultaneously, as policy moves towards an Active Employment Strategy.

Two projects in this Area are already



Above: Secretary Jackie Comer (left) and Librarian Lynn Sitsky

underway in the Centre and will be carried forward into the 1995-1997 Research Agenda.

The Two-Earner Couple: Stage II



## Possible New Projects in Income Security, Taxation and Labour Market Programs

### Income Adequacy

The social security system established benchmarks of adequacy for pensions and family payments. However, there are no comparable benchmarks for a number of other payments, notably for unemployment assistance.

Appropriate benchmarks of adequacy for income support for the unemployed is one research priority. This would include consideration of the costs of job search (also covered under Work, Employment and Socio-economic Change), and would continue the work on benchmarks of adequacy currently being undertaken by DSS.

We will be looking at whether locational factors should be incorporated in adequacy benchmarks, and, in particular, how variations in housing costs should be recognised.

### Policy and Program Implications of Changes in Work

These projects would be closely related to those outlined in Work, Employment and Socio-economic Change, concerning changes in the nature, distribution and market value of work. For example, what are the implications of the increase in part-time work, of changes in labour force careers, or of greater wage inequality for social security, taxation and labour market policy?

This research will range from cross-national comparison of policy responses to common labour market developments, to evaluation of specific labour market and income support programs.

### Lifetime Incomes and Asset Accumulation

Australian research into policies affecting incomes has been almost wholly cross-sectional, despite the widely recognised importance of life-course considerations and the associated significance of asset accumulation alongside income flows. This importance has been highlighted by the recent increase in attention to retirement incomes policy.

Research here would look at the impact of policies and programs on life-time incomes and on asset accumulation. Possible projects would include research into aspects of retirement incomes and into the role of inheritance in coming years.

### Dependency and the Tax-transfer Unit

Changing patterns of work have important implications for deciding what is the most appropriate unit for implementation of the tax-transfer system. Should it be the individual, the income unit, or some other grouping? Current work on the dual-earner couple has examined tax-transfer units to some extent, and future research on income sharing will provide an important empirical basis for further analysis.

The pattern of dependency in caring relationships is also important. Consideration of alternative units in the tax-transfer system would include assessment of their distributional and fiscal implications.

### Administration of Income Support

Perceptions of the income support system held by actual or potential recipients, by service providers, and by the public at large, will play an important role in both the effectiveness of income support and the degree of general public support. Research to date has neglected to determine what these perceptions are. We need to understand their role in the functioning of income support to investigate, for example, the appropriate balance between compliance and take-up objectives, and between targeting and simplicity objectives.

builds on Stage I's account of the socio-economic changes and policy developments associated with the substantial increase in married women's labour force participation. Stage II draws the material together, including an evaluation of policy developments according to criteria of equity, efficiency and rights.

Social Policy Futures responds to the perception that social policy research has tended to have either a retrospective or a short-term view instead of a longer-term, forward-looking perspective. The project entails a review of current Australian policy research and development to identify, firstly, strengths and weaknesses in approaches to taking a longer-term view and, secondly, gaps in existing approaches and analyses.

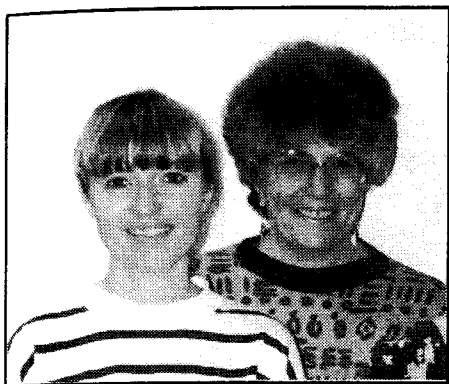
### Research Area Five: Community Services Policies and Programs

Community care for people with disabilities in Australia is an important area of policy at all levels of government. In the light of the demographic and social changes mentioned earlier, it is likely to continue to expand and be subject to continuing adjustment and re-appraisal.

The evolving and experimental nature of measures and policies associated with the support and enablement of people with disabilities and/or special needs in the community presents exciting challenges to research. As the demand for services increases, policymakers are attempting to balance the need for service efficiencies, especially cost efficiencies, with adequate, indeed enhanced, consumer outcomes.

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Below: Research Assistant Cathy Thomson (left) and Senior Research Fellow Sara Graham



The Centre's research program in community services will continue to interact with, and be responsive to, policy and program initiatives and to the need for their evaluation. This means that in this Area we need to be particularly cautious about planning research too far ahead.

Notwithstanding this, community services research over the period of the next triennium will build on the experience gained over the past five years. The Centre's research to date has concentrated on frail older people and younger

## **the Research Agenda**

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## **Possible New Projects in Community Services Policies**

### **Inequalities and Access to Community Support**

This research will examine the relationship between social and economic circumstances and the receipt and outcomes of community support for frail older people.

The aim will be to find out, firstly, whether decisions made by such people in their selection and use of domiciliary and community-based support services are influenced by their personal financial circumstances. Secondly, we will look at what consideration service providers give to the financial circumstances of clients in their allocation of services, and the fee charging policies applied by service administrators.

### **Pathways to Services and Support**

There is a considerable international research literature on the take up of social security provisions. However, the factors associated with the take up of community services are less well understood. This project would be concerned with questions associated with the take up of services, the knowledge people have of the services that are available, and the impact of this knowledge on the take up of services. The study would also document the problems that people have experienced in their encounters with the service world, especially with access and referral.

### **The Experience of Living in the Community with a Mental Illness**

Community care for people with a mental illness involves the provision of both income support and a variety of services, both specialist and mainstream.

The Commonwealth Government recently announced its intention to provide funds towards the enhancement of provision for people with a mental illness. It will be important to monitor how these funds are used and their impact on the daily lives of people with a mental illness and their family members.

This proposed project will first identify, within one health region, the extent and type of support available in the community for people with a mental illness. It will then explore, over time, the experiences of such people, including their access to appropriate health and social support arrangements as well as their experiences in the housing and employment markets. Gaps in provision will be identified at an early stage in the research and how funding is used to fill these will be closely monitored.

people with physical and intellectual disabilities and their diverse needs for support and social care. The time has now come to encompass client groups with needs other than those presently met through the provision of community care.

If funding permits, the research program will expand to include provisions for people with a mental illness who live in the community. We also hope to look at active participation in employment and housing programs.

## **The Future**

The 1995-1997 Research Agenda attempts to be specific enough for planning and accountability, but provide enough flexibility to enable researchers to respond to new ideas and policy needs.

At this stage, it contains more potential projects than can be conducted within the time and resources likely to be available over the period. As potential research studies become actual ones, we expect finer details to emerge from the broad brushstrokes given in this article.

Formal project proposals detailing the scope, methodology, resource commitments and published outputs of proposed research studies must be approved by the Centre's Management Board. The aim of this process is to ensure research studies which are of high quality, which are relevant to the needs of policy makers and the wider social policy community, and which cohere with others in a larger plan. The Research Agenda provides the framework within which this process will take place over the next three years.

# 1995 National Social Policy Conference, 5 -7 July

**R**egistrations are open for the 1995 National Social Policy Conference to be held at the University of New South Wales. Details and registration form can be found in the brochure enclosed with this Newsletter.\*

We also have good news for those frantically trying to prepare their abstracts - the deadline for offers of Conference papers has been extended to **31 March**. Papers may present the results of research, discuss conceptual approaches, describe work in progress, or raise new issues for debate in Australian social policy. We welcome papers presenting all points of view.

Conference discussion will be arranged in the following five social policy areas. There is also an Open area.

## 1 • Work and Welfare

Work and welfare have been affected by structural changes in the Australian economy and their consequences for both paid and unpaid (domestic and volunteer) labour.

Access to employment, the emergence of the 'working poor' and the effectiveness of the social safety net represent key policy concerns. Recent changes in social security and education and training have yet to be evaluated. Changes in paid employment have affected caring work with young children, the frail elderly, people with disabilities, and in general family and community settings.

## 2 • Social and Economic Inequality

Several dimensions of inequality increased during the 1980s in Australia and elsewhere. The causes and consequences of those changes are still under discussion. Trends encompass the changing distribution of income among individuals and households, and the relative position of social groups such as women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ethnic groups and the residents

of urban and regional areas. Social and economic policies face pressing questions in the areas of employment, education, income security, and taxation.

## 3 • Family, the Life Course and the State

Gender roles, marriage and family life are altering rapidly. Changes in education, employment, and family formation are also reshaping the life course of individuals, with life-cycle stages of youth and education, marriage and parenthood, employment and retirement no longer

organisations of all kinds, making new demands with respect to efficiency, accountability and responsiveness to diverse client groups. The effects of these changes on the organisation and availability of community services is an important policy and research issue.

## 5 • Citizenship and the Mixed Economy of Welfare

Increasing social expenditure, concerns about the effectiveness of welfare programs and an ideological climate of 'economic rationalism' are giving impetus to a 'mixed economy of welfare'.

Policy is reshaping the balance of public and private provision, seeking to co-ordinate the roles of the individual, family and community with that of government. In areas as varied as retirement income, community care and child protection, policies put new emphasis on needs being met through markets, households and non-government organisations.

## 6 • Open

The 'Open' section provides for discussion of topics not included in any of the areas described above.

## Selection of papers

If you wish to offer a paper, please send us the title and an abstract of no more than 200 words. Acceptance of papers for presentation at the Conference is necessarily competitive. Selection is the responsibility of the SPRC and will be based on abstracts. Criteria for selection will include academic quality and relevance to the conference theme.

Send by **31 March 1995** to:

Social Policy Conference Papers  
Social Policy Research Centre  
University of New South Wales  
Sydney NSW 2052

or fax

(02) 385 1049

Enquiries should be directed to Marilyn McHugh on (02) 385 3863.

Deadline for abstracts  
extended to March 31!



Social Policy and the  
Challenges of Social Change

1995 National Social Policy Conference • 5 - 7 July 1995

experienced as linear and to be lived in fixed, serial order. Families are increasingly vulnerable in the capacity of members to provide care within and between generations.

## 4 • Community Services

Community care is an important area of policy at all levels of government. With an ageing population and continuing de-institutionalisation, it is likely to continue to expand.

Changing funding regimes are affecting the management of community or-

\*For more registration brochures, telephone (02) 385 3863, fax (02) 385 1049 or email [sprc@unsw.edu.au](mailto:sprc@unsw.edu.au)