

## SPRC Newsletter - May 2007

**Author:**

Aldridge, Duncan; Purcal, Christiane; Thomson, Cathy

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## CULTURALLY DIVERSE WOMEN AND SPORT

BY NATASHA CORTIS

*There's nothing laid down in statutes that [says] you can't join in. No one can discriminate on race or language in sport. If somebody wants to play, they can play (NSO3).*

This quote, from an interviewee in a national sporting organisation, reflects a view common in Australia, that sport is a level playing field, accessible to all. Yet patterns of participation in this sphere of social and cultural life are far from equal.

In Australia, women are less likely than men to participate in organised sport. Women are less likely to participate in either organised or non-organised sport or recreation activities if they are born outside the main English-speaking countries, especially if they are not proficient in spoken English (ABS, 2006). In 2002, less than one in five

women born in North Africa or the Middle East participated in sport or recreation, compared with over three in five women born in Australia (see Table 1).

The SPRC is looking behind these trends, in research commissioned by the Australian Government Office for Women (Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs). The project is examining how women from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds participate in sport and recreation, and the barriers they may experience. The research is designed to inform the development of strategies to effectively support CALD women's participation. The project team is currently analysing findings from the third and final stage of the

research (focus groups with CALD women). In the meantime, findings from the first two reports (a literature and data review, see Cortis et al, 2007, and a stakeholder consultation report, see Cortis and Muir, 2007) shed light on some of the factors behind CALD women's low rates of participation in sport.

### CONCEPTUALISING SPORT AS SOCIAL INCLUSION

The project is premised on an understanding of sport and recreation as an opportunity to promote social inclusion and express cultural diversity. On the one hand, sport and recreation are opportunities to build community networks; promote, celebrate and affirm difference; challenge

*Continued on page 4*



Natasha Cortis

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**LEAD ARTICLE:**  
Natasha Cortis discusses the participation of culturally and linguistically diverse women in sport.

EDITORS ♦ DUNCAN ALDRIDGE, CHRISTIANE PURCAL AND CATHY THOMSON

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*Acting and Deputy Director*  
Professor Ilan Katz

*Director, Australian Professorial Fellow and Scientia Professor*  
Professor Peter Saunders

*Professorial Fellow*  
Professor Bettina Cass

*Senior Research Fellows*  
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Christie Robertson  
Peter Siminski

*Visitors*  
Priyatharsheni Balachandran  
Hanna-leena Myllarinen  
Heidi Norman

*Social Policy Research Centre*  
Building G2  
Western Grounds  
University of New South Wales  
Sydney NSW 2052, Australia  
Phone: +61 (2) 9385 7800  
Fax: +61 (2) 9385 7838  
Email: [sprc@unsw.edu.au](mailto:sprc@unsw.edu.au)  
<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au>

## THE SOCIAL POLICY RESEARCH CENTRE

The Social Policy Research Centre is located in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of New South Wales. Under its original name, the Social Welfare Research Centre was established in January 1980, changing its name to the Social Policy Research Centre in 1990. The SPRC conducts research and fosters discussion on all aspects of social policy in Australia, as well as supporting PhD study in these areas. The Centre's research is funded by governments at both Commonwealth and State levels, by academic grant bodies and by non-governmental agencies. Our main topics of inquiry are: economic and social inequality; poverty, social exclusion and income support; employment, unemployment and labour market policies and programs; families, children, people with disabilities and older people; community needs, problems and services; evaluation of health and community service policies and programs; and comparative social policy and welfare state studies.

*The views expressed in this Newsletter, as in any of the Centre's publications, do not represent any official position of the Centre. The SPRC 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.*

## STAFF AND VISITOR UPDATE

### ARRIVALS:

PRIYATHARSHENI BALACHANDRAN (Priya), a Bachelor of Economics and Social Sciences (Combined) student at UNSW, has started an internship at the Centre.

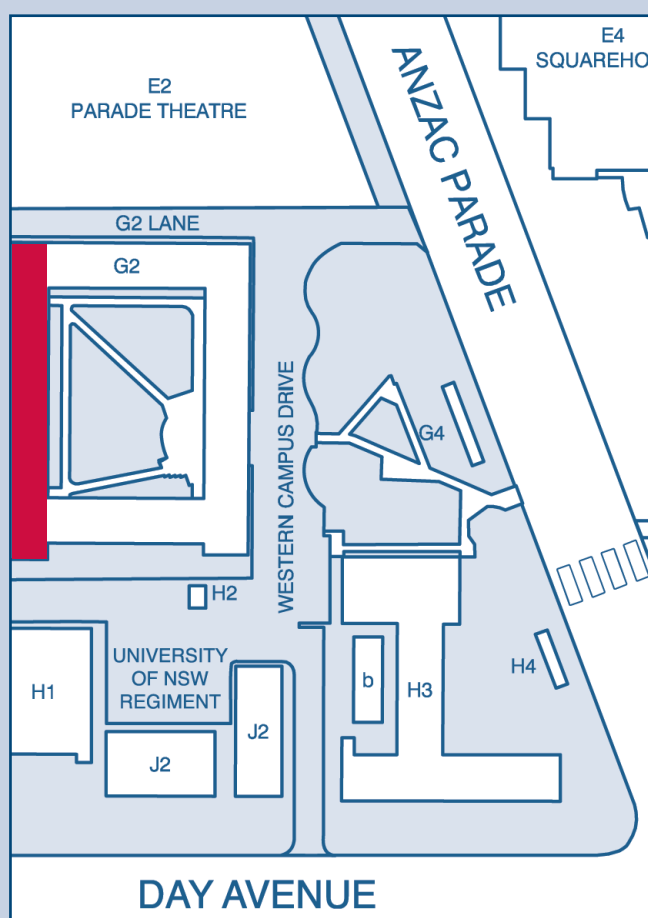
### DEPARTURES:

OFIR THALER completed his internship at SPRC.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS:

DR KAREN FISHER and DR SARAH PARKER have been awarded their PhDs.

TRISH HILL has received a two-month British Academy Visiting Fellowship for 2007. She will be working with Professor Susan Himmelweit, Economics Discipline, Faculty of Social Sciences, The Open University.



**The Social Policy Research Centre is located at G2 on the Western Side of Anzac Parade, Kensington Campus, enter via Day Avenue.**

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

BY ILAN KATZ



The impending implementation of the Research Quality Framework (RQF) in Australia is looming. We are waiting in trepidation to understand the implications for academia generally and social policy in particular. Some things are more or less certain – that the RQF will bring with it unprecedented levels of bureaucracy, paperwork and endless meetings, efforts by universities to ‘poach’ staff from each other and create ‘short cuts’ to get around the system, and that all this effort is unlikely to justify whatever outcome transpires.

On the other hand, the RQF has already engendered some interesting and important debates, for example on how to classify social policy and, more significantly, on the question of impact in research.

The question of classification is interesting in that social policy is not a single discipline like history or chemistry. The SPRC staff are, for example, drawn from a wide range of disciplines and publish in journals representing the whole spectrum of the social sciences. Interestingly, social policy is represented in at least three different Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines (RFCD) codes. This is generally considered a strength, and social policy has always practised inter-disciplinary research – now a *sine qua non* of successful large scale research. But the RQF seems to be pushing academics back into their core disciplines rather than recognising the inter-disciplinary nature of much contemporary scholarship.

However, the more interesting issue raised by the RQF is that of research impact. Here social policy research should, by definition, do very well, being probably the most ‘applied’ discipline in the social sciences. Social policy research has always been based on the premise that policies will benefit society more if they are based on rigorous research evidence. Much of the

research we undertake is commissioned by governments or other agencies such as the OECD with the specific purpose of influencing future policy. Moreover, it may be good for social researchers to begin to think about research impact. After all, our research is largely funded by the taxpayer, who has a right to know that money is wisely spent and that there is accountability and utility in social research.

At the same time, some features of the RQF cause concern to all social scientists. The original proposals for measuring impact are very concrete – money made for Australia, lives saved etc. Social policy can’t compete with engineering or chemistry in this respect. Although social policy research should have *influence*, it seldom has a direct or easily measurable *impact*. There are also very difficult technical issues – for example how to measure impact and over what period it should be measured.

There are even more fundamental concerns relating to impact. The impact of a specific piece of research on government policy often depends on such extraneous factors as timing. Often governments will pick up on a particular piece of research because the findings fit into their political program, whereas other research (which may well be more rigorous or of higher quality) is ignored because it is inconvenient or unattractive to government at the time. In Australia the recent IR policies and policy in relation to climate change are examples where research has been ignored. (In this vein it could be argued that the most influential research projects are opinion polls, not academic research at all!) The implementation of social policy research is especially dependent on the vagaries of political discourse, media attention and public opinion. Much of our research is specifically aimed at giving voice to

marginalised sectors of the population who are not able to influence policy directly through the normal political process.

Furthermore some social research has an impact for the wrong reasons. A researcher who challenges the accepted – i.e. progressive – orthodoxy of most social policy research (especially from the right) is likely to garner media attention and even a sympathetic mention by a minister or two, irrespective of the quality of the research on which the claims are based.

This raises another interesting question. The term ‘impact’ is itself value free, and the assumption is that the more impact research has, the better. However, it is perfectly possible for research (like any other social phenomenon) to have a negative as well as a positive impact. Should this research score equally on the RQF impact statement?

Finally, the most fundamental question of all is the basic assumption of the RQF (and indeed of the ARC and most research funders nowadays) that academic research should act as the R&D department for ‘Australia Inc’, and therefore that research is only valuable to the extent that it furthers the ‘national interest’ in some way. This is certainly an important consideration – but there are other equally important ways in which research may be of value.

These are just some of the issues that researchers will have to confront over the next couple of years as the RQF takes shape. It would be easy, but wrong, to dismiss the concept of research impact, and it would similarly be wrong to insist that researchers should become ever more accountable for the immediate practical consequences of their research. In my view, the task of social policy researchers is to put into the public domain the highest quality analyses of their data. The question of impact depends to a large extent on others outside of the academy.



*Ilan Katz*

stereotypes; and enhance intercultural relations (Hanlon and Coleman, 2006). Sport can build social inclusion if social justice norms and values are transmitted from multicultural sporting contexts into the rest of society, and if experiences in other areas of society improve as a result of being involved (Walseth and Fasting, 2004). On the other hand, sport and recreation activities may (often inadvertently) suppress difference and exacerbate exclusion, if individuals must conform to dominant cultural norms in order to participate (Taylor, 2004).

## UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION

Sport and leisure researchers have identified six main factors that may dampen the desire to participate, and prevent or reduce participation for CALD populations (Tsai and Coleman, 1999):

1. *Socio-cultural barriers* arise from requirements to follow codes or traditions in sport that are incompatible with cultural practices or beliefs.
2. *Access constraints* include a lack of culturally appropriate facilities, transport and child care.
3. *Affective constraints* relate to the appeal and meaningfulness of activities. Interest in sporting activities is culturally mediated, and a lack of awareness of opportunities has been identified as a contributing factor to low rates of participation amongst CALD populations.
4. *Physiological constraints* relate to poor health and old age. While these are not unique to CALD women, health barriers may vary between cultural groups.
5. *Resource barriers* include a lack of time and money to participate in sport. These are often underpinned by women's care responsibilities, which constrain both disposable income and leisure time.
6. *Interpersonal factors*, such as

**Table 1: Participation in sport and physical activity by sex and region of birth, Australia, 2002**

	Males (%)	Females (%)	All (%)
North-West Europe	69.8	64.7	67.4
Australia	68.5	63.6	66.0
Oceania	69.1	63.6	66.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	72.0	60.0	50.8
Americas	67.5	56.0	52.6
North-East Asia	68.8	53.5	61.9
South-East Asia	61.1	52.3	56.2
Southern and Central Asia	63.0	43.6	74.2
Southern and Eastern Europe	44.1	40.7	42.5
North Africa and the Middle East	42.7	19.5	31.2

*Source:* Migrants and Participation in Sport and Physical Activity (ABS 2006: 10)

not knowing anyone to participate with, also present barriers to CALD women's participation. Family, friends and community-based networks have been identified as important to women's decisions to participate (Taylor, 2002).

## STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES

How these barriers and constraints might affect CALD women in Australia was explored in interviews with stakeholders in sporting, cultural and women's organisations. Six of the 15 interviewees were from National Sporting Organisations (NSOs) (see Table 2). The interview questions explored stakeholders' perceptions of the barriers to CALD women's participation, how their organisations address these barriers (if any), and their views about what strategies (if any) might be required to better support CALD women.

**Table 2: Interview participants by organisation type**

	No. Interviews
National sporting organisations (NSO)	6
State and community sporting organisations (SCSO)	2
Industry organisations (IO)	1
State government organisations (SGO)	2
Cultural organisations (CO)	2
Women's organisations (WO)	2

## STAKEHOLDERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BARRIERS

Overall, the interviews show how the idea of sport as a 'level playing field' remains pervasive, and that supporting cultural diversity is not considered a high priority amongst National Sporting Organisations. Indeed, some interviewees did not perceive sport itself to present particular barriers for CALD women, with one interviewee arguing 'The way sports operate, I don't see any issues at all. I don't see impediments', but rather 'It's the cultures that cause barriers, not the sport itself' (NSO6).

However, all interviewees did identify some barriers that may decrease CALD women's desire to participate; prevent participation; or hinder women from participating to

their desired levels. These included racism, dress codes, a lack of culturally appropriate facilities, and insular organisational cultures in sport (for more detail, see Cortis and Muir, 2007).

Some interviewees had seen racism affect CALD women:

*When you're dealing with club administrators who are not experienced or who haven't previously had multicultural people in their club, you get racist attitudes. It's about a lack of understanding and ignorance, I think. I believe it can also happen between the players themselves. ... It may not be overt, [but] it may be exclusionary (SGO2).*

Most of the barriers identified were indirect. Dress was seen as a particular barrier for Muslim women who may need to comply with culturally sanctioned standards of modesty whilst participating. Interviewees from state and community based organisations described difficulty in negotiating access to sporting facilities with culturally appropriate levels of privacy in exercise spaces and change room areas. Although interviewees cited examples of swimming pools or gyms offering women-only spaces for a couple of hours a week in some areas, this was perceived as largely inadequate to meet demand.

Family expectations and responsibilities were also seen as barriers to CALD women's involvement. Although these barriers are shared with other women, they were seen to have a cultural dimension, with some young CALD women taking on greater household responsibilities, especially where migration has broken extended family care relationships. Finally, sporting organisations and clubs were identified as presenting barriers to CALD women's participation, where they had strong established

or insular cultures. As one NSO interviewee explained:

*The nature of a club is, it's a community already; it's an established group that do things a certain way. So for someone to come in cold not knowing anybody [it could be difficult], we're not going to attract many CALD women at all to sport. I think it's intimidating to come into a set culture... Some clubs, the member type clubs, would be very much like that – a stuffy, traditional, conservative type environment (NSO4).*

## STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CALD WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SPORT

Strategies identified to overcome the barriers CALD women face included providing information about sport in Australia, providing programs through partnerships between sporting and cultural organisations, affiliating ethnic sporting groups to state or regional sporting structures, and involving CALD women in developing and promoting opportunities. Cross-cultural training for staff in sporting organisations, and recruiting female and culturally diverse coaches and referees were also suggested.

Interestingly, in the discussions no NSO interviewee identified that their organisation had a cultural diversity policy. Although such standards or frameworks do exist, NSO interviewees did not identify that they shape their organisations, suggesting that high-level diversity policies or frameworks may be poorly implemented, if at all. A final point is that interviewees were largely unfamiliar with what other organisations were doing to promote the participation of CALD women in sport, and programs that did exist tended not to be evaluated. Evaluating strategies and disseminating findings would

help build knowledge about best practice in engaging CALD women in sport and recreation and overcoming barriers for different groups.

The final stage of the study, twelve focus groups with ninety-four CALD women (completed in early 2007), was informed by these findings. We hope to present the focus group findings at the Australian Social Policy Conference in July.

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# NEW PROJECTS

## YOUNG CARERS: SOCIAL POLICY IMPACTS OF THE CARING RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG ADULTS

Australian Research Council  
Linkage Grant

Bettina Cass (SPRC), Deborah Brennan (University of Sydney), Ilan Katz and Cathy Thomson (SPRC) and Deborah Mitchell (ANU), with Partner Organisations in NSW: Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care; Department of Health; Commission for Children and Young People; Carers NSW; in South Australia: Social Inclusion Unit, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Department of Education and Children's Services; Children Youth and Women's Health Service; Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology; Department for Families and Communities; Carers SA.

In Australia, 348 600 children and young people aged up to 24 provide care for family members with a long-term illness or disability. This project will investigate the circumstances, experiences and needs of these young carers and their care recipients. The study consists of six integrated research strands: review of the theoretical, empirical

and practitioner literature on young carers and their families in Australia, UK and USA; analysis of national data sets; focus groups with government and welfare sector policy makers and service providers; interviews with young carers and care recipients; audit of federal and state policies and programs for young people with caring responsibilities and care recipients; and the development of a cost-benefit analysis of the work of young carers.

The project will identify the costs to young carers of their care provision, with respect to their participation in education, training, employment and social activities; and impacts on their health and well-being. It will also focus on the benefits of the care relationship to the young people, their families, communities and government through savings on formal services; and the social policy frameworks in which the care-giving relationships are embedded. It will provide a comprehensive audit of policies and services for young carers and care recipients, and identify gaps for future policy development and service provision.

The expected outcomes are contributions to theories of care-giving which have, to date, not focused sufficiently on age; evidence about the diverse socio-economic and demographic characteristics of young carers and care recipients and their diverse

experiences; and options for the development of appropriate, affordable and supportive policies and services.

## SERVICE NEEDS OF RESIDENTS IN PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

Disability Services Queensland

Karen Fisher, Gerry Redmond and Jacqueline Tudball (SPRC); Sally Robinson (Disability Studies and Research Institute); Lesley Chenoweth (Griffith University)

The project is examining the nature and volume of need for government and non-government support services among residents of private residential services in Queensland. It is profiling people living in private residential services across regions in the state to determine the scope and frequency of service support access, to identify gaps in services and supports, and to identify what services need to be developed. It is examining which services are being accessed and how often; which services are needed but not accessed; the barriers to service access; and what services are required but not provided by government or non-government agencies. The research findings will inform future funding and service development strategies to improve access to and support from mainstream services for people living in private residential services.

## SPRC SEMINAR PROGRAM MAY TO JUNE 2007

### TUESDAY 29TH MAY

Heidi Norman (Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning (UTS) and Visiting Fellow, Social Policy Research Centre)

*Aboriginal Land Rights in NSW - from assimilation to self-determination*

### TUESDAY 12TH JUNE

Dr Tony Eardley, Professor Bettina Cass, Dr Denise Thompson and Dr Ann Dadich (Social Policy Research Centre)

*Measuring 'Self-reliance' Amongst Users of Homelessness Services: Conceptual and methodological Challenges*

### WEDNESDAY 27TH JUNE

Professor Ian Walker (University of Warwicks, Visiting Professor Centre for Health Economics Research and Evaluation (UTS) and School of Economics (UNSW))

*Ostensible Hypothecation: The effect of cash transfers to the elderly for fuel on their fuel expenditure*

# TOWARDS NEW INDICATORS OF DISADVANTAGE PROJECT

## BULLETIN NO. 2: DEPRIVATION IN AUSTRALIA

BY PETER SAUNDERS

### INTRODUCTION

An article in an earlier issue of the SPRC Newsletter described the *Left Out and Missing Out (LOMO): Towards New Indicators of Disadvantage* project and presented results on the essentials of life. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage Grant Scheme and is based on a collaboration between the SPRC and our Industry Partners Mission Australia, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, ACOSS and Anglicare, Diocese of Sydney. The research has generated new nationwide data that is being used to identify who is deprived ('missing out') and excluded ('left out') from the benefits associated with Australia's current period of extended economic growth and rising incomes.

The data has been produced by two surveys conducted in 2006. The first was a national postal survey of 6 000 adult Australians drawn at random from the electoral rolls. This was supplemented by a second survey targeted at those who used selected welfare services provided by the Industry Partner agencies. Both surveys were conducted over a three-month period in mid-2006. Welfare service clients were asked to complete a shortened version of the main survey when they accessed services - almost none of those approached refused to participate. The first (postal sample) was designed to build, for the first time, a comprehensive national picture of the extent and nature of deprivation and social exclusion in Australia. The second (client sample) is significant because the most vulnerable people are generally under-represented in postal surveys, and also because we wanted to find out more about the kinds of problems faced by welfare service clients, who are by definition doing it tough.

As explained in the earlier article, 2 704 people responded to the postal survey (a response rate of about 48 per cent), while 673

completed the shorter client survey. Further analysis indicates that the postal sample is reasonably representative of the general population, although it contains more people over 50 than the population, whereas the client sample is dominated by younger people (under 30), because these are the age groups at which the services that were included are targeted. Together, the two surveys provide a very rich source of new data that are being analysed to gain a better understanding of the kinds of problems faced by those who have been left out and are missing out - those that the benefits of economic progress have thus far, failed to reach.

### THE ESSENTIALS OF LIFE

Both surveys included a series of questions asking which among a list of items are essential in Australia today - things that no-one should have to go without. Participants were asked to indicate for each item:

1. Whether or not they thought that the item was essential for all Australians;
2. Whether or not they themselves had the item; and
3. If they did not have the item, whether this was because they could not afford it, or because they did not want it.

The last question was only asked of those items that individuals themselves could buy; it was not asked of items like access to a public telephone, or to a bulk-billing doctor under Medicare that cannot be bought by individuals but are provided collectively by government.

The 'essentials of life' questions covered a broad range of items, activities, opportunities and other characteristics that previous research has shown to be associated with deprivation and social exclusion. The list of potential items included basic items (for example, a substantial meal at least

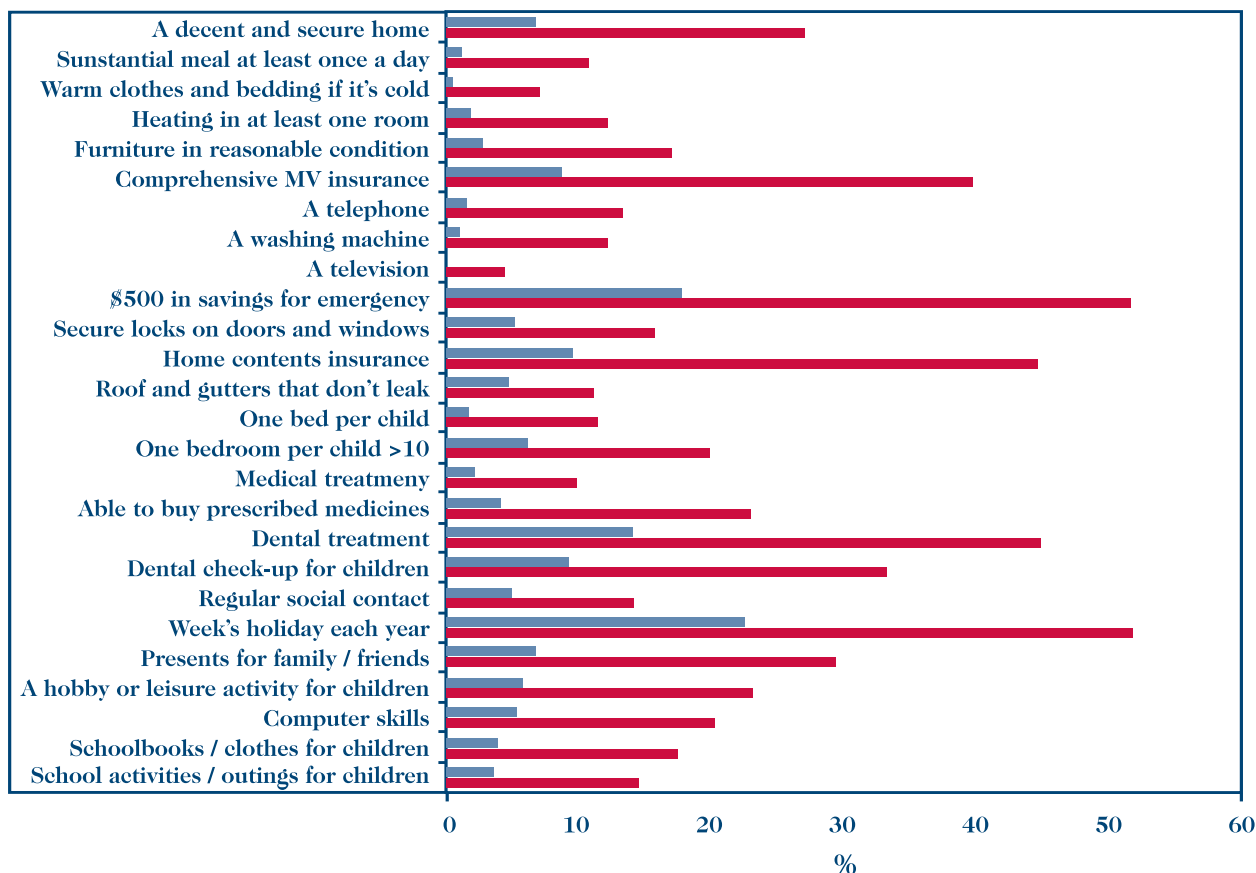
once a day; heating in at least one room of the house), items that reflect or influence people's connections with community life (to be treated with respect by other people; a night out once a fortnight), items that people need at particular times in their lives (dental treatment; child care for working parents), and the ability to make use of key facilities and services (good public transport; and streets that are safe to walk in at night). Several of the items related specifically to the needs of children, including a separate bed for each child, a local park or play area for children, and up to date schoolbooks and new school clothes.

### FROM ESSENTIALS TO DEPRIVATION

The definition of deprivation that has evolved from three decades of international (mainly British) research is *an enforced lack of socially perceived necessities (or essentials)*. The first stage in identifying the profile of deprivation involves identifying the list of socially perceived essential items. As indicated in the earlier article, responses to the 'Is it essential?' question were used to identify which items are regarded as essential by a majority of the population. This benchmark was taken as indicative of items about which there is a community consensus that they are essential. Only the postal sample was used in this stage, because we were interested in what *the community as a whole* regards as essential in modern-day Australia. Of the 61 items included in the postal survey, 48 passed the 'majority rule' criterion. However, a number of these items could not be bought by individuals and were thus not used to identify deprivation, which focuses on an *enforced lack* of each item that results from not being able to afford it.

The earlier article indicated that two items - a car and a separate bedroom for each child aged over

Figure 1: The Incidence of Deprivation among the Postal (Blue) and Client (Red) Samples (percentages)



10 – were very close to the 50 per cent cut-off. Further analysis revealed substantial differences in the views of different age groups about these two items (particularly about the car) and after adjusting for the over-representation of older people in the postal sample, support for the car being essential fell just below the threshold. It was therefore excluded from the final list, which contained the 26 items shown on the left hand side of Figure 1. The list includes basic needs items, such as a decent and secure home and a substantial daily meal, consumer durables like a washing machine and a television, access to medical and dental services and to prescribed medications, social participation activities such as regular social contact with others and an annual holiday, and risk-protection items like secure locks at home, insurance coverage and savings for an emergency.

Figure 1 shows the percentages of the two samples that are deprived in relation to each of the 26 items. For the postal survey, the incidence of deprivation is very low in the case of items like a

substantial daily meal, warm clothes and bedding, a telephone, a television and a separate bed for each child. Those items where deprivation is most severe are a week's holiday away from home each year (22.4 per cent), \$500 in savings for use in an emergency (17.6 per cent), dental treatment when needed (13.9 per cent), home contents insurance (9.5 per cent), an annual dental check-up for children (9.0 per cent), and comprehensive motor vehicle insurance (8.6 per cent). These patterns are unaffected when the postal sample is weighted to reflect the age structure of the population as a whole.

All but one of the items where deprivation is highest relate to steps that people need to take to protect their longer-term security: an adequate level of savings for use in an emergency, appropriate insurance coverage and access to dental care. The absence of these items among large sections of the population highlights the fact that many Australians may be managing, but are only a minor mishap (a scrape in the car, a toothache, or a broken refrigerator) away from

being unable to make ends meet financially. The other item where the incidence of deprivation is high – a week's holiday away from home – might be seen by some as a 'luxury' that has little to do with being deprived or disadvantaged. However, this item only enters the list because a majority of the population (around 53 per cent) regard it as essential: it is what *the community* thinks is essential that determines what is included in Figure 1, not what we as researchers think. This variable also has an insurance element, reflecting the need for families to have a break together and relax and re-group, away from the pressures of everyday (working) life.

The findings for the client sample paint a far bleaker picture of the extent of deprivation than those for the postal sample. At one level, this is hardly surprising since the client sample has been deliberately chosen to represent those who, having been forced to seek assistance from a welfare service, are likely to be most disadvantaged. Even so, it is still important to establish just how deprived those who use welfare

services actually are. The average incidence of deprivation across all 26 items among the client sample is 22.2 per cent, four times higher than that for the postal sample (5.7 per cent). The difference is hardly affected by adjusting for the differences in the age composition of the two samples.

Among those in the client sample (re-weighted so that it has the same age composition as the postal sample), the incidence of deprivation is highest in relation to a week's holiday away (51.7 per cent), not having \$500 in savings for use in an emergency (51.6 per cent), home contents insurance and dental treatment (both 44.7 per cent), and comprehensive motor vehicle insurance (39.7 per cent). The deprivation rate exceeds one-quarter in relation to 8 items (whereas it never exceeds this figure in the postal sample). Around one-in eight of those in the client sample report not being able to afford a substantial meal once a day, to heat at least one room in the house, to have a washing machine, a separate bed for each child, have regular social contact with other people, or can afford to let their children participate in school outings or activities.

The evidence on deprivation among those who use welfare services illustrates the enormity of the challenges facing those who are working at the coalface of service delivery in these agencies. With tightly constrained budgets, these service delivery agencies can do little more than act as a palliative against the worst extremes of deprivation. The fact that those using welfare services face such high levels of deprivation suggests that the limited resources available to the services are being targeted effectively, but it also raises questions about the adequacy of the resources they have at their disposal. These are issues that should be of concern not just to those working in the services, but to all genuine 'fair go' Australians.

MULTIPLE DEPRIVATION

Previous studies have shown that many of those who experience deprivation in one area also face it in several others, compounding their problems and adding to the

Table 1: The Incidence of Multiple Deprivation (percentages)

Number of items lacking because they cannot be afforded	Postal sample	Client sample
0	61.5	25.2
1 or more	38.5	74.8
2 or more	26.4	64.7
3 or more	18.8	59.0
4 or more	14.2	52.7
5 or more	11.1	45.5
6 or more	8.1	39.9

complexity of solutions. Table 1 compares the severity of deprivation in the postal and client samples. Almost two-fifths of the postal sample experience at least one form of deprivation and more than one-quarter (26.4 per cent) are deprived in two or more areas. One-in-nine (11.1 per cent) are missing out on at least five essential items simultaneously. Although some will be reassured by the finding that over two-thirds experience no deprivation, the high numbers that are missing out in five or more areas will concern many others.

The extent of deprivation in the client sample is far higher than in the postal sample, and the findings again reveal the severity of the problems facing this group. Thus, almost two-thirds (64.7 per cent) experience two or more forms of deprivation, while close to half (45.5 per cent) are missing out on five or more items. The magnitude of the difference between the two samples is illustrated by the fact that the percentage of the postal sample that are deprived in two or more areas is the same as the percentage of the client sample that are deprived in eight or more areas. (The estimated multiple deprivation rates for the client sample increase by between two and four percentage points if the adjustment made to bring its age composition in line with that of the postal sample is removed).

The multiple deprivation rate differential between the postal and client samples cannot be assumed to imply that the latter group experience four times as much deprivation as the former, since the relationship between the number of essential items lacking and the

extent of deprivation may not be linear. Even so, it is difficult to deny that those who use welfare services are 'doing it tough', missing out on many of the items seen as essential by a majority of the population.

DEPRIVATION SCORES

In light of the extent of multiple deprivation shown in Table 1, it is clear that the incidence rates shown in Figure 1 do not reveal the full story about the severity of deprivation faced by different groups. In order to explore this issue more fully, a deprivation index has been derived by adding up the total number of items for which each individual is deprived. The average value of this index (or score) can then be calculated for groups in the population and used to compare the extent of deprivation experienced by different socio-economic categories. There are grounds for applying different weights to each of the items included in the index. Thus, an item could be counted more heavily if it is regarded as essential by a higher percentage of the population (attitudinal weighting), or each item could be weighted by the proportion of the population that actually possesses it (prevalence weighting). Neither approach has been used here, although future research is examining the robustness of the findings to different weighting patterns.

Table 2 shows how the deprivation index varies across socio-economic groups defined on the basis of their age, family type, employment status and Indigeneity. It reveals that there is a clear downward-sloping age gradient to deprivation among the

postal sample, although the gradient is somewhat less pronounced among those in the client sample. The pattern of deprivation across family types shows that deprivation is higher among single people than among couples (at all ages), increases for couples with children and increases again sharply for sole parent families. The level of deprivation experienced by Indigenous Australians is very high - the highest among any single category identified in this analysis - and exceeds that of the non-Indigenous population by a factor of more than four-to-one.

It is interesting to note that many of the between-group differences revealed in the client sample are smaller in relative terms than the corresponding relativities contained in the postal sample. Thus, the 4.2-to-one differential associated with Indigenous status in the postal sample is only 1.5-to-one in the client sample, while the 3-to-one employment to unemployment relativity in the postal sample falls to two-to-one in the client sample. To some extent, this reflects the fact that the postal sample is more diverse than the client sample, which is concentrated on those in greatest need. However, it is also striking that large differences in deprivation between the postal and client samples remain even when comparing *within* activity categories: thus, the deprivation score among those in the client sample who are unemployed is considerably higher than among the unemployed in the postal sample, while those in the client sample who are employed experience only slightly less deprivation than those in the postal sample who are unemployed. These comparisons suggest a number of factors are driving the results and that further analysis is warranted before any firm conclusions about the determinants of deprivation can be identified with certainty.

## IN CONCLUSION

This article has examined the deprivation profile of the Australian population, as reflected in the postal sample, and drawn a series of

**Table 2: Mean Deprivation Scores by Selected Socio-economic Characteristics**

Characteristic	Postal sample	Client sample
<i>Age:</i>		
Under 30	1.97	5.55
30-64	1.43	5.62
65 and over	0.87	2.61
<i>Family type:</i>		
Single, working-age (WA)	2.14	5.14
Single, older person (65+)	1.33	3.16
WA couple, no children	0.84	4.14
Older couple (65+)	0.55	2.67
WA couple, with children	1.29	4.59
Sole parent	3.48	7.14
<i>Main activity:</i>		
Employed	1.15	2.92
Unemployed	3.66	5.85
<i>Indigenous (ATSI):</i>		
Yes	5.60	7.25
No	1.33	4.82

comparisons with deprivation among the smaller sample of welfare service clients. The estimates show that there is great variety between the two samples both in terms of the incidence of each deprivation indicator, in the extent of multiple deprivation and in the overall severity of deprivation (as captured in a simple unweighted deprivation score, or index).

More detailed analysis reveals substantial differences in the severity of deprivation across different sub-groups in the population, defined on the basis of a broad range of socio-economic characteristics. Although the between-group differences have been considered in isolation, many of them overlap and thus reinforce the combined impact on deprivation. Indigenous Australians, for example, tend to have low levels of education, to be more likely to be unemployed and/or reliant on social security for their income and to be renting their home, all of which are associated with a higher level of deprivation. These complex, deep-seated and often mutually reinforcing effects suggest that a coordinated plan of action is needed to address the different forms of deprivation

experienced by those who are missing out.

It is clear that the deprivation approach provides a valuable new insight into the nature and extent of disadvantage in contemporary Australia. It seems irrefutable that some in the general population and many in the sample of welfare service clients are missing out on the essentials of life and are thus deprived - often in many areas. If we are serious about addressing disadvantage, the patterns revealed in this research suggest that action is urgently needed to combat the many forms of deprivation that currently exist.

## REFERENCES

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Dr Sarah Parker

The celebrations continue at the Centre with more great news. Warmest congratulations go to **Dr Sarah Parker**, whose PhD was awarded by the University of Sydney, Faculty of Arts, in April. Sarah, Research Officer at the SPRC, is currently working on the *Evaluation of the Early Intervention Program* for the NSW Department of Community Services and researching the *Effectiveness of Supported Living in Relation to Shared Accommodation* for the Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Sarah is also co-ordinating the Centre's internship program for students completing their undergraduate and masters degrees (as reported in the previous newsletter).

We are also pleased to report that **Roger Patulny** has achieved an important milestone in his research career with the acceptance of his PhD at UNSW in January



Roger Patulny

2007. Roger, who worked at the SPRC for some years, has recently returned from the University of Surrey, Department of Sociology, where he worked as a Research Fellow on the Economic and Social Research Council-funded study *Social and Political Trust (SAPT)*. Roger has taken up a position at the Office of Ageing, NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, looking at aspects of community care and ageing in place. He hopes at some stage to undertake further research into aspects of community, trust and social capital.



Gerry Redmond

**Gerry Redmond**, Research Fellow, is undertaking a PhD study on *'Understanding the Impact of Poverty on Children's Outcomes'*. The thesis sets out to explore the relationship between resources and outcomes for school-age children in Australia. It addresses two questions. First, what is the relationship between family characteristics, including income level, and children's outcomes in key areas of health, education and participation in community and other activities? Can these outcomes be 'predicted' from permanent characteristics of their parents, such as education, or do changes in income, family formation and other events over time also matter? Second, existing literature focuses mostly on outcomes that relate to children's journeys towards adulthood. But

children also exist in the present: school-age children are, in general, reflexive individuals who respond to and in turn influence their lived environment. How well do different measures of poverty and deprivation capture children's current well-being and integration into society, and how can children's own perspectives inform on the relevance of different measures of poverty and exclusion? These questions will be examined using Australian panel survey data, supplemented by qualitative data on children's own perspectives on economic disadvantage.

**Jacqueline Tudball**, Research Officer, is nearing completion of her PhD thesis at the Centre for Health Equity, Training, Research and Evaluation (CHETRE), UNSW. Her research examines children's asthma self-management. The thesis uses a grounded theoretical, mixed-method design, including face-to-face interviews with children 5-12 years of age and their parents and an analysis of the NSW Child Health Survey 2001. Rather than exploring the extent to which children's self-management practices adhere to clinical guidelines, Jacqueline is investigating the tools, strategies and processes that children use to manage their asthma; how children collaborate with their parents in the use of these; and the implications of self-management for children and their families in New South Wales.



Jacqueline Tudball

# CHINESE DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION POLICY

BY KAREN FISHER



Karen Fisher

This article describes research undertaken in 2006 in China on Chinese disability policy. It summarises the research process, findings and implications for SPRC participation in Chinese disability policy research.

## RESEARCHING CHINESE DISABILITY POLICY

The newly signed UN Convention on the *Rights of Persons with Disabilities* defines housing and accommodation support to mean shelter, physical access, support and skill development to live independently. A place to live, and support to live in it, is a basic need and, in many cases, a precondition to exercising other rights. However, it can be costly for governments to support. Consequently, developing new responses to disability accommodation support needs are a research priority for Australian governments.

As yet, few researchers have explored the lived experience of people with disabilities in China and its social policy implications. To address this gap, I conducted research in Beijing with the assistance of Li Jing and Yan Ming from the Institute of Sociology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

As a first step in researching disability policy in China, we sought to understand disability experiences of accommodation support policies in Beijing. The research, conducted between November 2005 and January 2006 in Beijing, included interviews and meetings with policy participants, including people with disabilities, and observations of social services and governance processes. The findings presented here describe how people who need support with their accommodation meet these needs through informal and formal support. This does not include

people with disabilities without accommodation support needs who live independently.

## FORMAL POLICY RESPONSES

As with most Chinese social policy, disability support is primarily the responsibility of the person and their family. Only where a person has no family to support them does the state intervene. The China Disabled Persons Federation (CDPF), a quasi-government organisation, is responsible for disability policy. Other government agencies provide support and services depending on the person's circumstances and support needs (Ministry of Civil Affairs, Education, Public Health, Labour and Social Security and Construction). Policy implementation is the responsibility of provincial and local governments, and it varies according to the resources and priorities of the local administration. Housing and accommodation support are not included in the primary disability policy, the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Disabled Persons 1990.

Some people with disabilities live in households eligible for minimum income allowance, depending on the resources of the administering local government. In most cases, the allowance does not include assistance with housing, medical services or education.

## A PLACE TO LIVE

Most people with disabilities live independently or with family members in the community, relying on informal support from family, friends or their Residents Committee - the smallest unit of local government. We also found rare cases of fee-based private

services or non-government support. We did not find examples of policy to support self-organised, independent living or family-led accommodation initiatives.

Although officially families of people with disabilities are eligible for cheaper public housing, in practice public housing is rarely available. For example, the priority in one district is to reallocate public housing to people with disabilities when former residents move to private housing, but only one house became available in 2005.

Housing options for people with disabilities without family support are stark. The government has several institutional options: institutional aged care; homeless shelters; psychiatric care in hospital or public security facilities; and other welfare institutions. We also found a small number of private charitable institutions. The Beijing Disabled Persons Federation does not fund any community-based accommodation. As a consequence of the limited accommodation support options, a disproportionate number of people who are homeless are disabled.

Reflecting international experience, most disabled children live with their family. In the inner city community we visited, all children lived with their family and people did not know of any past exceptions. We did not find evidence of formal support for families of children with disabilities, such as home-based or personal care or skill development, except informal care from volunteers organised by local government. Children with disabilities are disproportionately represented in out of home care. We found four examples of non-government housing for children and young people. Government rarely supports these services, which rely on fees paid by families, donations and international aid.

## ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

In addition to housing, some accommodation support is available through social services to assist people to live independently in the community. Support was evident in community centres, such as community health centres; Residents Committees initiatives; day activity services; and a Community Rehabilitation Services pilot. The services we observed were medical, technical and therapeutic, rather than home-based or personal care services. An exception was the variety of services supported by the Residents Committees.

In addition, we found a small number of other services such as home-based care and personal care services; equipment and home modifications; and special schools. These examples were far from universal, but reflect emerging policies that support community participation. Local government officials referred to organising volunteers to support families or offering paid workers for a short period to assist people or families in crisis.

## IMPLICATIONS OF THE POLICY EXPERIENCE

The research has implications for disability rights and policy change. Current disability accommodation support policy relies on government support as a safety net for people with disabilities without families. The rationales for this policy position are first, that Chinese culture assumes primary family responsibility; and second, government officials claim they cannot afford the cost of an alternative service system for all people with disabilities when China has such a vast population and disability services are not a priority compared to other pressing social problems. These rationales do not engage with disability rights.



*Disability policy research in inner city Beijing 2006: Karen Fisher (3rd from left) talks to a man with elderly parents, both with a disability, whose home has been demolished. On the right, a woman on a tricycle provides mobility support to her husband. (Photo: private)*

Despite the 1990 law protecting disability rights, people with disabilities are prevented from participating in Chinese society and accessing services other citizens can expect. The research revealed examples such as institutional care as the only option for people with disabilities who need support but have no family; and limited opportunities for education, employment and community participation. Poverty and cost of services also preclude access to basic care and socially inclusive activities.

Urban Chinese people with disabilities are gradually benefiting from other social policy initiatives, including the minimum income allowance. The Chinese Government has yet to prioritise policy to support people with disabilities to live independently, support families caring for relatives with disabilities, facilitate community housing or build accessible housing. A critical gap in current policy is an absence of community support services to substitute for family support for people with disabilities with personal care needs. Undoubtedly, these policy options require

resources. More significantly, they also require a commitment to promote the rights of the diverse members of the community, not just the majority.

## FURTHER RESEARCH AND COLLABORATION

The research identified several innovative approaches to accommodation support that, when further researched, could inform systemic policy change. These approaches were initiated through self-advocacy, community members, non-government and local and central government. Research conducted in collaboration with people with disabilities and Chinese disability researchers would contribute to a reflective understanding of the policy context. Initially, we are building on Dr Shang Xiaoyuan's research partnerships with Chinese government and non-government agencies to research the policy implications of the experiences of families of children with disabilities.

Thank you to the research participants and the Endeavour Australia Cheung Kong Award.

# AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL POLICY

## SOCIAL POLICY THROUGH THE LIFE COURSE: BUILDING COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Registrations are now open. To register online go to [www.hotelnetwork.com.au/conference.php](http://www.hotelnetwork.com.au/conference.php) or contact the Hotel Network on (02) 9411 4666 or email [aspc@hotelnetwork.com.au](mailto:aspc@hotelnetwork.com.au).

### KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



**Families and policies matter: how to enhance the well-being of children in poverty**

*Professor Jeanne Brooks-Gunn*

Virginia and Leonard Marx Professor in Child Development and Education, Columbia University. Founder and Co-director of the National Center for Children and Families, Columbia University



**Shifting child-care policies and practices in Western Europe: is there a case for developing a global ethic of care?**

*Professor Fiona Williams*

Professor of Social Policy, School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds. Past Director of the ESRC Research Group for the Study of Care, Values and the Future of Welfare, University of Leeds



**Governing work life intersections in Australia over the life course: policy and prospects**

*Professor Barbara Pocock*

Director of the Centre for Work+Life, University of South Australia

# CONFERENCE 11-13 JULY 2007

## FORUMS

Forum sessions are listed below, along with provisional speaker details. Further information on speakers will be made available on the conference website once confirmed.

### *Advocacy and consumer participation*

- Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW
- Annette Michaux, Director, Executive Strategy Unit, Benevolent Society
- Michael Raper, Director, Welfare Rights Centre NSW; President, National Welfare Rights Network Australia

### *Building family and community capacities: policies that make a difference for children and families facing economic adversity*

- Robyn McKay, Deputy Secretary, Australian Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
- Professor Ross Homel, Director, Key Centre for Ethics, Law, Justice and Governance
- Adjunct Professor Don Weatherburn, Director, NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research

### *Rethinking Indigenous policies and programs: building community strengths and social resilience*

- Dr Tim Rowse, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University
- Colleen Murray, Executive Officer, Tirkandi Inaburra Cultural and Development Centre
- Heidi Norman, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, UTS

### *Australia's demographic challenges*

- Phil Gallagher, Senior Executive Manager, Retirement and Income Modelling Unit, Commonwealth Treasury
- Professor Peter McDonald, Director, Australian Demographic & Social Research Institute, Australian National University
- Professor Julian Disney, Director, Social Justice Project, University of New South Wales

## CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

As in previous conferences, discussion will be organised around thematic strands. Strands will be selected from the following topic areas

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| • Labour market participation and welfare reform | • Community and place   |
| • Income distribution and social inequalities    | • Organisation and delivery of human services   |
| • Retirement and ageing                          | • Citizenship and participation   |
| • Children, young people and families            | • An open strand will also exist for papers on other subjects of interest and importance outside the main themes. |
| • Identity and diversity                         |   |

There will also be a special networking session on researching the impact of welfare to work reforms.

## CONFERENCE DINNER

The conference dinner will be held at the Crown Plaza, Coogee Beach, on Thursday 12 July and tickets are \$85 per person. Entertainment will include an after-dinner talk from Ross Gittins, Sydney Morning Herald economics columnist and author of 'Gittinomics'.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Further information is available from the conference website at [www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2007/index.htm](http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/ASPC2007/index.htm). This will be updated as details are finalised. For queries about papers or the conference in general, phone (02) 9385 7802 or email [aspc2007@unsw.edu.au](mailto:aspc2007@unsw.edu.au).

## RESEARCH METHOD WORKSHOP

Tom Wengraf London East Research Institute, University of East London, UK  
with Prue Chamberlayne Open University, UK

### THE BIOGRAPHIC-NARRATIVE INTERPRETIVE METHOD: INTERVIEWING FOR LIFE HISTORIES, LIVED SITUATIONS AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Two world-renowned experts on the Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method of research, Tom Wengraf and Prue Chamberlayne, will be visiting Sydney to present this research method. There will be a one-day workshop on Monday, 17 September, and a five-day workshop from 10-14 September. The one-day introductory workshop is limited to 20 participants, with tuition fees of \$200 each. The five-day course costs \$1000 and is limited to 12 participants.

Both courses will be held at the Social Policy Research Centre, Western Campus, University of New South Wales.

Please contact Duncan Aldridge (d.aldridge@unsw.edu.au) to register or for further information.

*Please be advised that we require a minimum number of participants for the workshops to proceed.*

### SPRC NEWSLETTER REVIEW

The SPRC is currently reviewing the content and layout of this newsletter. If you have any comments or suggestions, please e-mail Duncan Aldridge on d.aldridge@unsw.edu.au.

## PUBLICATIONS AND MAILING LISTS

### MAILING LISTS (FREE)

- ☐ SPRC Email Notices *You will receive email updates about events at SPRC*
- ☐ SPRC Newsletter Mailing List *You will receive Newsletters regularly*
- ☐ SPRC Annual Report Mailing List *You will receive Annual Reports*

Fisher, K.R and S. Parker, *Effectiveness of supported living in relation to shared accommodation, Summary of the research plan*, SPRC Report 6/07, December 2006.

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