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Falling behind: Australia's meagre unemployment benefits

By Peter Whiteford



The world economic situation is uncertain. Unemployment in the Euro area increased from 10.0 to 10.8 per cent between February 2011 and February 2012, the highest level in almost 15 years. Even though the unemployment rate in the USA has fallen from 10 per cent towards the end of 2009 to 8.2 per cent currently, the proportion of adult Americans in employment (58.5 per cent) has not increased at all over this period.

These trends stand in marked contrast to Australia, where unemployment peaked at around six per cent before falling back to 5.2 per cent currently and the adult employment to population ratio remains close to historic highs (61.8 per cent). While Australia has not been unscathed by global economic turmoil, we remain far better-placed than most other rich countries.

Increased living standards

These recent trends followed a period of sustained increases in Australian living standards. As

pointed out by Bob Gregory and Peter Sheehan (2011) between 2002 and 2011, real per capita household disposable income in Australia grew at nearly three times the rate of the previous two decades. In related work, Bob Gregory (2011) has noted that: 'Together, direct and indirect trading gain income effects have lifted Australian living standards, relative to the US, from a long run average of around 92 per cent, over the 1959-2003 period, to a current level of 115 per cent. In just eight years, Australian living standards have increased an amazing 25 per cent, relative to the US; an extra-ordinary change' (Gregory, 2011:17).

These trends are also reflected in the household income surveys conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). Median household income fell marginally in

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* staff and research scholar

SPRC staff as of 17 April 2012

Staff and visitor update

Arrivals

TAHNEE DOTTI has joined the SPRC as an Administrative Assistant.

MARY VIJENDRA from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship visited the SPRC from January to May. **ZAHRA GHORBANI** from Community Oral Health, Iran, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, visited the SPRC from March to May. **CARSTEN WERGIN** from Germany commenced his Visiting Fellow appointment in the SPRC.

Announcements

ILAN KATZ stepped down as Director and **PETER WHITEFORD** is now Acting Director.

LYN CRAIG stepped down as Deputy Director, and **kylie valentine** is now Acting Deputy Director.

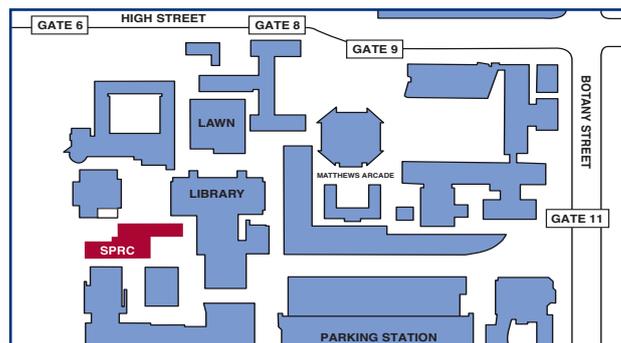
BETTINA CASS has been appointed as Emeritus Professor. **PATRICK DODSON** has been appointed as Honorary Professor. **ABIGAIL POWELL** has been promoted to Research Fellow. **GERRY REDMOND** has been appointed as Adjunct Associate Professor and has taken up a position at Flinders University. **GEORGIA VAN TOORN, KATHERINE LANHAM** and **SINEAD REILLY** have completed their internships at the SPRC.

MINAKO SAKAI from Canberra, **MIKI MURATA** from Osaka, Japan, **JIANPING YAO** from Beijing, China, **BJORN HALLEROD** from Gothenburg, Sweden, **RIANNE MAHON** from Waterloo, Canada and **KATHERINE SANG** from Norwich, UK visited the SPRC between November 2011 and April 2012.

GUL IZMIR was a Professorial Visiting Fellow in the SPRC between January 2009 and January 2012.

Departures

SHANNON McDERMOTT, SILVIA MENDOLIA, KILLIAN MULLAN, MARIANNE RAJKOVIC, REBECCA SINCLAIR, ROXANNE LAWSON, IOANA OPREA, DAVID ABELLO and **JUANITA VARGAS** have left the SPRC.



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Photos by MEDIKOO pages 1, 3 and 7 and by Paramount Studios page 6 (first author). All other photos are private.

From the Director



By Peter Whiteford

Social policy issues have been prominent in recent federal budgets and in public discussion of economic trends. The Treasurer described the May budget as a ‘battler’s budget’, while critics have seen it as ‘a big taxing, big spending budget, including a big increase in welfare,’ ‘a big dose of class warfare,’ or a bid to ‘smash the rich.’

Can such strong characterisations be justified? The budget contained important social policy initiatives, including increases in Family Tax Benefit (FTB) A, a new schoolkids bonus replacing the education tax rebate, and a new income support supplement for people receiving Newstart and Youth Allowance. The government also announced the first stages of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), improvements in dental healthcare and new spending on aged care reforms. At the same time, savings were made through parenting payment changes, lowering the age of eligibility for FTB and restricting the portability of pensions.

These changes should be put into context. Combined, the ‘spreading the benefits of the boom and support for families’ package, the dental health package, the first stage of the NDIS and the aged care package will increase Commonwealth spending over four years by around \$8 billion. Out of total annual budget spending of \$376 billion, around \$132 billion or 35 per cent goes to social security and welfare, and a further \$61 billion to health. Over that four-year period, \$8 billion in extra spending represents less than one per cent of total spending on health, social security and welfare, hardly a massive increase.

What may be surprising, however, is that this modest increase in social spending is occurring at a time when the Government plans a

budget surplus. It would be normal in this environment to make cuts in social spending, not small increases.

The ways that the Government has chosen to fund these initiatives and also bring the budget into surplus needs to be taken into account. In 2012-13 the largest single saving is in defence spending, followed by deferring changes to the superannuation concession cap, deferring increases in overseas aid, and not proceeding with the company tax cut.

“The real story of this and other budgets is less about ‘class warfare’ than about the complex interplay of measures over a number of years.”

Whether these changes constitute ‘class warfare’ is debatable. One major change targeting the very rich – the reduction in superannuation tax concessions for those earning over \$300,000 a year, a subset of the top one per cent of Australians – has a small revenue cost next year. Over a four-year period, the changes labelled by the Government as ‘improving fairness in the tax system’ become more significant.

Since 2007, federal budgets have included many changes to reduce ‘middle-class welfare.’ Carbon pricing also starts from July this year, and a major component of the Government’s plans for a clean energy future is a compensation package for households, including increased pensions, allowances and family payments, and income tax cuts for lower income

taxpayers. The estimated impact of this is mildly progressive (after factoring in the otherwise mildly regressive impact of price increases). These changes also should be put into the context of the substantial tax cuts that Australians enjoyed in the last decade, which significantly raised the top income tax rate threshold and favoured higher income households.

While discussions of the budget tend to focus on ‘big ticket’ items, some smaller welfare changes are particularly welcome, even if their impact is more symbolic than substantial. The income support supplement increases the single rate of Newstart by around \$4 a week, which is not likely to make much of an impact on the deepening poverty of this group, but is some recognition of the fact that there has been no real increase in this benefit since 1994. Just as welcome is the decision to double the liquid assets test thresholds, which will help reduce the likelihood that people impoverish themselves just to get on to Newstart in the first place.

Other spending initiatives may initially be relatively small, but over time will become far more significant, particularly in human terms, notably the National Disability Insurance Scheme and the aged care package.

So the real story of this and other budgets is less about ‘class warfare’ than about the complex interplay of measures over a number of years. To understand these interactions it is necessary to have analysis that is objective, comprehensive and looks at long-term trends. Our past record of performance highlights the value of a Centre like the SPRC that can undertake and publish independent policy-focused research, and that can look further than current headlines, both to develop a balanced assessment of winners and losers and identify the consequences of individual policy changes.

Unemployment benefits

continued from page 1

the period between the onset of the global financial crisis and the most recent survey in 2009-10, but in the decade before the GFC median household income grew by 53 per cent after adjusting for inflation. Income growth was highest for the richest 20 per cent of the population at close to 60 per cent in real terms, but even for the poorest 20 per cent, real incomes grew by more than 40 per cent between 1996 and 2007.

So despite ongoing uncertainty about global economic conditions, prosperity in Australia remains both very high and relatively widespread. But clearly there are groups not sharing in this abundance. Incomes and wealth are dynamic – even if most people on average are better-off than similar groups in the past, individuals rise up and fall down the income ladder. But one group in Australia has not shared at all in our rising national prosperity – people receiving unemployment payments.

People reliant on pensions and benefits are generally recognised as being amongst the poorest in our community. Age and disability pensioners have always received higher payment rates than the unemployed, but the gap has widened significantly since 1997, when the Howard government started to index pensions to average weekly earnings, but continued to index payments for the unemployed to the CPI.

Gap between pensioners and unemployed

Following the recommendations of the Harmer Review (Harmer, 2009), in September 2009 the federal government increased the single rate of age pension by more than \$35 per week: this was the largest pension increase in Australian history. The scale of this increase is not widely appreciated. The increase in real pension rates in 2009 was roughly

equal to the cumulative real increase in pensions over the 11 years of the Howard government, and was also greater than the cumulative increase in pensions in the period of the Whitlam government, usually regarded as the highpoint in welfare state expansion in Australia.

This was a very welcome change that significantly reduced income poverty among the aged. However, these increases widened the gap between benefits for the unemployed (including payments for some lone parents with children eight years and over) and pensions for older people, people with disabilities and carers, to the point where the shortfall is now nearly \$266 per fortnight. In 1996, a single unemployed person received 92 per cent of what was paid to a pensioner; that ratio is now 65 per cent.

Unemployed are falling behind further

It is not just that the unemployed are falling behind other social security recipients – they are falling behind every other group in the community on virtually any measure that one can devise:

- Since 1996 payments for the single unemployed have fallen from 23.5 per cent of the average wage for males to 19.5 per cent currently;
- Since 1996 the level of Newstart for a single person has fallen from around 54 per cent to 45 per cent of the after-tax minimum wage;
- Newstart has fallen from 46 per cent of median family income in 1996 to 36 per cent in 2009-10 – or from a little way below the common relative income poverty standard to a long way below;
- In 1996, a single unemployed person would have received an income that was about \$14 a week (in 2010 values) less than a

person at the 10th (the lowest) percentile of the overall income distribution. In 2009-10 they would have been \$116 a week below a person at the 10th percentile.

In brief, Newstart recipients are falling into continuously deepening poverty.

The impoverishment of Newstart recipients is written into legislation and cannot be alleviated without government policy change. As the system is currently configured these gaps will continue to grow over time.

The 2010 Intergenerational Report (Department of the Treasury, 2010) shows the scale of the challenge. Under current policies, age, carers and disability pensions are indexed to wages, while most other payments for people of working age and families are indexed to prices. The Intergenerational Report projects that wages and therefore pensions will rise by four per cent a year on average, while benefits and allowances would rise in line with prices by 2.6 per cent a year. The result – if these provisions actually continued for forty years – would be that in 2050 a single unemployed person would be receiving a payment little more than 11 per cent of the average male wage, compared to 19.5 per cent now.

Despite the fact that Australia is one of the wealthiest countries in the world, we now have one of the least generous benefit systems for the unemployed. In fact, for a single person on the average wage losing her job, Australian benefits are now the lowest in the OECD (OECD, 2012).

Unemployment has risen

But does this matter – surely the best solution for unemployment is for people to find a job? As noted earlier, Australia has been very fortunate in having one of the lowest increases in unemployment of any OECD country since 2008, but we should not overlook the fact that unemployment has still risen significantly. In June

2008 the number of people receiving Newstart Allowance was just under 430,000, its lowest level since the 1980s; this rose to 602,000 in February 2010 and has come down to 574,000 in February this year (the most recent available figure; DEEWR, 2012). The number of people on Newstart for twelve months or more rose from 250,000 in late 2008 to around 350,000 in recent months, although this also appears to be coming down.

Reforms designed to encourage employment of welfare recipients, particularly people with disability and lone parents, will also mean that more working age income support recipients will be paid under Newstart conditions in future.

Would raising benefits to a more adequate level keep the unemployed out of jobs or even cause low paid workers to give up jobs? As noted earlier, since 1996 the level of Newstart for a single person has fallen from around 54 to 45 per cent of the after-tax minimum wage. If it were still 54 per cent of the net minimum wage, then benefits would be around \$100 a fortnight higher. It is difficult to see that going back to the 1996 relativities between Newstart and the minimum wage would pose serious disincentives to work. In addition, do we really think that people need to be impoverished in order to maintain incentives to work?

Inadequate rent assistance

Currently, single unemployed adults receive about \$490 per fortnight in Newstart payments, or \$35 per day. If they are renting privately, they are entitled to up to \$120 per fortnight in rent assistance, but to get that amount their rent has to be more than \$267 per fortnight, leaving them with just \$24.50 per day for everything else; and that assumes they can find somewhere to rent for \$267 a fortnight. The

NSW government's Rent and Sales Report (2011) found that in late 2011 the cheapest one-bedroom homes in Sydney's outer ring were in Wyong – around 90 kilometres from the CBD. If you were on Newstart and paying rent for a one-bedroom property in Wyong you would have just \$17.15 a day left over for your food, clothing, transport and other bills. If you were paying a typical rent for a one-bedroom flat in Liverpool, only 40 kilometres from the CBD, you would have less than \$10 a day for everything else. While nearly 30 per cent of Newstart recipients are under 25 and may be able to live with their parents, 36 per cent are over 40 years of age and are likely not to have this option.

Henry recommends benefit increase

The problems faced by the unemployed have been recognised by the Henry Review of the tax system (Australia's Future Tax System Review, 2010), which pointed out the need for a principles-based approach to setting payment levels. Establishing adequacy benchmarks for transfer payments not considered in the Pension Review would make the system more robust, particularly if the benchmarks were preserved through a common but sustainable indexation arrangement. This would mean an increase to base rates for single income support recipients on Newstart. The Henry Review also recommended that the maximum rate of rent assistance should be increased and the rent maximum should be indexed by movements in national rents (Whiteford, 2010).

So, the official inquiry into Australia's tax and benefit system recognised that unemployment benefits are too low. This problem is not going to go away. Current policies are simply going to make the problem more difficult to deal

with if decisions are postponed. It is worthwhile remembering that one of the first initiatives of the Hawke government was to increase the rate of unemployment benefits, recognising that lack of consistent indexation had made these payments inadequate. It is time the current government recognised that unemployment payments need to be increased.

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An alternative Indigenous research strategy

By Darryl Cronin and Carsten Wergin

There is a tendency to pin much economic hope on so-called Western forms of development such as mining, but the related discourse serves largely to overwrite Indigenous ideals. There is research and practice in regards to Indigenous ‘development’, for example by the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, Eco Trust Australia, and the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University. However, discussions at the recent *Songlines versus Pipelines?* seminar at the SPRC (see report in this newsletter) have raised questions around how research can incorporate the interests of Indigenous people in the ‘development’ paradigm.

How can researchers, for instance, facilitate Indigenous people’s attempts to be heard through recognising and highlighting Indigenous values and perspectives on ‘development’?

How will they suspend dominant frameworks? What, for example, is ‘economics’? What is its cultural, social and legal context? How might it apply to Indigenous ‘development’?

Indigenous people have always managed to adapt to social and economic changes and created livelihoods using both Indigenous and Western ways of ‘development’. In the development paradigm Indigenous people see opportunities within the context of diverse factors that make up country, such as the cultural economy of landscape, its people and their relationships with each other, their ancient narratives, knowledge about the environment and the diversity of ways in which country is valued. In the main, Indigenous people strive for a sustainable, happy and fulfilling life, which includes adding value to a cultural economy beyond monetary interests. Therefore one of the central aims for Indigenous research should be to ensure there are measures to make these values heard.

The least an Indigenous research strategy should offer is to translate Indigenous stories into a language that will allow for it to play a significant role in decision-making processes and policy development. It needs to create new frames of reference to transform thinking and foster productive dialogues. Research that facilitates narrative and transforms thinking, attitudes and practices can enrich discussions on intercultural understanding and lay the foundation for alternative forms of action. Whatever the imperatives are, people always feel that there are values worth espousing. Often these values offer alternatives to strictly market-oriented approaches.

This is a call for a research practice built around how

Indigenous people see the world. Stories are one way of identifying and highlighting values and perspectives of Indigenous people. They are entangled with Indigenous culture, identity and way of life, such as a connection to place, autonomy, and a freedom from external control. How do you understand and share stories about landscape and people to envision a new future? How do you recognise and negotiate between competing values? Stories of what people value can locate commonalities to create a sense of a new reality as opposed to the simplified ‘us’ and ‘them’ approach of development discourse. One of the positive effects may be the production of an alternative discourse, an alternative strategy with regards to a more sustainable (research) development in Australia.

New and forgotten narratives are there to be rediscovered by an informed Indigenous research strategy – as well as significant responses to established ones. Stories will include visions, perspectives and ideas about what is a sustainable livelihood. They can present alternative political structures and analysis of organised groups and how they influence or capture opinions. They can also address the many different knowledge systems and entangled genealogies of disciplines like history, economics, anthropology, cultural studies, all of which produce their own stories – stories have been kept separate for too long.

It is an opportune moment for a new dialogue around a thinking-practice outside the structured set in which the academy becomes witness and facilitator of a larger project; a research activism used not to challenge or question the academy but to deliver alternative approaches and generate a more nuanced, trans-cultural dialogue about development in Australia.

We encourage further discussion on the issues we have raised and would be pleased to hear from people interested in engaging in the discussion.

Bettina Cass retires

Professor Bettina Cass retires

By Peter Saunders

Few people in Australian social policy will not have been influenced in some way by the work of Bettina Cass. Her contributions over the last three decades span the issues of unemployment, family policy, retirement incomes, work and employment, carers and caregiving, poverty and social inclusion – the list itself is testimony to the broad scope of her achievement. Her work displays the key features of social policy that she has always advocated for: the need for intellectual rigor, the importance of thinking internationally and comparatively, the roles of history and institutional structures, the need for policy relevance, and taking steps to ensure that ideas work in practice, not just in theory.

At the end of last year Bettina retired from her position as Professorial Fellow at the SPRC. The Centre is fortunate to have benefitted from two periods of Bettina's involvement, the first in its formative years in the 1980s and more recently since she re-joined us in 2005. Her early work on unemployment shifted the focus from a concern with high-level economic factors onto an individual-based sociological perspective. More recently, she has focused on the role of caregiving and the needs of carers, working with others to bring a better understanding of a set of issues that had long been neglected.

Many will regard her involvement in the Social Security Review as the highpoint of her career, and with good reason. The Review produced a set of reform proposals that remain the foundation for the current social security system. Bettina has also left her mark on reform in other areas through her involvement with public bodies such as the NSW Law Reform Commission and the South Australian Social Inclusion Board.

In the SPRC, in addition to her intellectual contributions, she has been a passionate advocate for equity within the workplace and an inspirational mentor to staff and students alike. Her role in building the PhD program has been of particular significance in extending the academic profile of the Centre.

Bettina has always been a delight to work with – bursting with enthusiasm for the academic project, fully briefed for every meeting and full of wisdom, her views always put with a rare combination of authority and

modesty. She brings collegiality, good sense and decency to every activity, and when she speaks, others listen and gain from her insight and knowledge. She will continue to contribute to the work of the Centre in her new role of Emeritus Professor, and we will all be the better for it.

I asked some of my colleagues who have worked closely with Bettina to write a brief reflection on what that association has meant to them, and the following comments illustrate her many qualities.

Professor Deb Brennan: Bettina is a wonderfully sociable colleague. We both believe that good food

and wine are excellent accompaniments to scholarly work, and we love working in teams that include students, junior and mid-career researchers. We've travelled a lot together, and our international collaborations have been career highlights for us both.

Myra Hamilton: I have been privileged to have had Bettina as my PhD supervisor and then project manager at the SPRC. Her intellectual guidance, professional support and personal mentorship (and a great deal of patience and good humour!) were instrumental in helping me to be where I am today. I'm sure I'm not the

only ex-student who thinks of her with both deep admiration and great affection.

Trish Hill: Bettina is a very generous mentor, always willing to discuss complex research issues and displaying much humanity in advice on how to address challenges, both professional and personal. Her determination to ensure gender issues remain on the agenda, and her appreciation of humorous moments in academic life are important contributions to the SPRC.

Cathy Thomson: The first time I heard Bettina speak she delivered a stirring and thought-provoking plenary address without notes, which were stolen along with her bag, wallet and airline ticket while she drove to the airport; an experience she deftly incorporated into her talk. At the time I never envisaged being fortunate enough to work with her, but I have. Bettina is an inspirational, generous and judicious mentor and colleague.



Emotions in social life and social policy

In October, the SPRC hosted a one-day inaugural workshop on *Emotions in Social Life and Social Policy*, in collaboration with the University of Sydney's Department of Sociology and Social Policy. Convened by Roger Patulny, Natasha Cortis (SPRC) and Gavin Smith (University of Sydney), the workshop brought together leading Australian researchers to improve recognition of emotion as a primary sociological concept, a factor influencing the functioning of many social policies, and the object of policies, such as those aimed at improving wellbeing or reducing loneliness, depression or violence.

Some presentations reported historical research into how cultural and institutional factors shape emotions such as risk and excitement (Prof. Pat O'Malley). Others used surveys of emotionality to provide insight into contemporary social experience, such as social wellbeing from an international time-use perspective (Roger Patulny and Kimberly Fisher). Further contributions captured emotional dimensions of more specific contemporary experiences of social isolation, by examining dislocation in mining communities (Barbara Pini); and skilled migrants' narratives of friendship and loss (Harriet Westcott). Several papers

analysed how emotions underpin and shape the everyday social practices of institutions, specifically political configurations (Emma Hutchinson and Roland Bleiker), judicial constitution and restorative justice interactions (Meredith Rossner) and gender arrangements and dynamics (Bob Pease). Papers also captured the performance of emotion work, exploring issues of allegiance and reciprocity in the emotionally infused work of aged care (Deb King), and emotion management among CCTV surveillance operators who routinely encounter trauma as they search for risky situations (Gavin Smith).

Several workshop papers will feature in a forthcoming issue of *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*. The event also provided momentum for the formation of a Thematic Group on the Sociology of Emotion and Affect (SEA) within the Australian Sociological Association (TASA). The SEA group, convened by Roger Patulny, Mary Holmes and Jennifer Sinclair, will host a follow-up workshop on emotions on July 6-7, 2012, at RMIT. Details can be found here:

<http://www.tasa.org.au/thematic-groups/groups/sociology-of-emotions-and-affect/>

National kinship forum

More than 130 people attended *Relationships across the Generations*, a one-day national kinship forum held in November at the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence, Redfern. The forum was organised by Marilyn McHugh and Kylie Valentine (SPRC) and funded by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (University of New South Wales). Participants came from government and non-government agencies as well as academia, with a strong representation from Aboriginal agencies in NSW.

Forum highlights included presentations from a national research project called *Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren*, by Prof. Deborah Brennan, Prof. Bettina Cass, Saul Flaxman and Christiane Purcal. The study examined the experiences of, and supports provided to, formal and informal Indigenous and non-Indigenous kinship carers. A second exciting event at the forum was the launch of the new *Winangay Assessment Tool for Indigenous Carers* by Aunty Susie Blacklock, Karen Menzies, Gill Bonser and Paula Hayden. Other presentations were by Argiri Alisandratos (Department of Human Services, Victoria), Meredith Kiraly (University of Melbourne), Bridget Jenkins (SPRC),

Cheryl Purchase and Jackie Dettman (NSW Family and Community Services), and Belinda Mayfield and Tamara Messinbird (Queensland, Department of Communities).



Aunty Susie Blacklock. Photo: private

Workshop on religion and social policy

In November 2011 Prof. Peter Saunders (UNSW) and Minako Sakai (UNSW Canberra) convened a workshop at the SPRC on *Religion and Social Policy in Australia and Neighbouring Countries*.

The workshop brought together prominent academics and practitioners from Australia and overseas from a diverse range of disciplinary backgrounds, religious perspectives and religious organisations. Topics discussed at the workshop included the relationship between religion and social policy development, the impact of policy changes in religious organisations from the perspective of practitioners and service providers, religious diversity and regional experiences.

The speakers involved in the two day workshop were: both convenors, Emeritus Prof. Gary Bouma (Monash University), Laura Bugg (University of Sydney), Prof. Brian Howe (University of Melbourne), A/Prof. Renate Howe (Deakin University), Jacqueline Nelson and Prof. Kevin M. Dunn (University of Western Sydney), Professor Allan Borowski (La Trobe University), Dr Alec Thornton (UNSW Canberra), Prof. Kung Lap Yan (Chinese University of Hong Kong), Prof. Samina Yasmeen (University of Western Australia), A/Prof.

Graham Hassall (Victoria University of Wellington), Chandima Daskon (University of Jayewardeneperura, Sri Lanka), Prof. John Wanna (Australian National University) and Prof. Sheila Shaver (SPRC).

A practical perspective from religious organisations was provided by Grant Millard (CEO, Anglicare Sydney), Rev. Harry J Herbert (Executive Director, UnitingCare-NSW/ACT), Fr Joe Caddy (Executive Director, CatholicCare Melbourne), and Sue King (Director, Advocacy and Partnerships, Anglicare, Diocese of Sydney).

The workshop was sponsored by the a grant from the Workshop Program of the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia (ASSA), with supplementary funding from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (UNSW), the School of Humanities and Social Science (UNSW Canberra) and the School of Physical, Environmental and Mathematical Sciences (UNSW Canberra). A longer report on the workshop will be published in the next issue of the ASSA publication *Dialogue*, and selected papers will appear in a forthcoming Special Issue of *The Australian Journal of Social Issues*.

Songlines versus Pipelines?

A two-day seminar on mining and tourism industries in remote Australia titled *Songlines versus Pipelines?* was held at the SPRC at the end of February. The seminar was the first independent scholarly event on this topic and intended to generate critical debate. It brought together Australian academics, government researchers and other experts as well as those directly affected by mining development, notably Indigenous people. It included presentations by established Australian experts such as Prof. Kerry Carrington (Queensland University of Technology), A/Prof. Tess Lea (University of Sydney), Virginia Watson (University of Technology Sydney), Kathie Muir (University of Adelaide), Joanna Parr (CSIRO) and Anne Poelina (Broome) as well as upcoming scholars like Magali McDuffie (University of New England), Deborah Che (Southern Cross University), Eve Vincent (University of Sydney), Timothy Neale and Michaela Spencer (University of Melbourne). The discussions were further enriched by inputs from Nina Mistilis and Prof. Larry Dwyer (University of New South Wales) as well as Darryl Cronin (SPRC).

Participants expressed an immediate need for new visions, perspectives and ideas about whether it is possible to generate sustainable livelihoods in

conjunction with the growing demands and environmental impacts of mining industries. In policy terms, *Songlines versus Pipelines?* presents itself as a 'wicked problem' because of the complexity of competing interests and perceptions of reality. There remains a strong need for more timely social and cultural policy to tackle these issues. This also includes further research into the mining boom as an everyday lived experience, to understand how policies are embodied in people's lives and to modify economic actions. Participants requested to turn *Songlines versus Pipelines?* into an annual event in order to continue the dialogue. The papers will appear later this year in the *Australian Humanities Review*.

The event was co-convened by Carsten Wergin, a Visiting Fellow at the SPRC from Germany on a three year Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowship, and Prof. Stephen Muecke from UNSW's School of the Arts and Media.

For more information visit:

<http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/news-and-events/songlines-vs-pipelines-mining-and-tourism-industries-in-remote-australia-1414.html>

New projects

Commissioned research

Progress review and outcomes evaluation of the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial

Ilan Katz, Bruce Bradbury, Darryl Cronin, Margaret Raven, Andrew Griffiths

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

This evaluation considers the impact of the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial which is being implemented in four Indigenous communities on the Cape York Peninsula based on a program developed by the Cape York Institute.

Developing final indicators of social disadvantage

Peter Saunders

Legal Aid NSW

This project will analyse data collected in a survey of their clients conducted by Legal Aid NSW with a view to providing insights into the nature of the social disadvantage faced by clients and with the aim of guiding possible reforms of the current means test used to determine client eligibility for legal aid services.

Valuing unpaid caring work in order to address women's unequal participation in the workplace and the gender gap in retirement savings

Trish Hill, Bettina Cass, Myra Hamilton, Cathy Thomson, Lyn Craig

Australian Human Rights Commission

This project analyses existing data and information about unpaid caring work and how it can be recognised and valued in the Australian context.

Easy and Standard Read Quality Assurance information for disability advocacy services

Ariella Meltzer, Karen Fisher

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

This project involves developing information about the new processes for the Quality Assurance auditing of FaHCSIA disability advocacy services, to be used by the people with a disability using these services.

Family Support Program evaluation 2011-2014

Ilan Katz, Fiona Hilferty, Marie Delaney, Andrew Griffiths, BJ Newton

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

This project is an evaluation of specific components of the Family Support Program (FSP) which is a national program that funds NGOs to provide a range of parenting, children's, and family law services to disadvantaged families. Core to the evaluation are a client experiences study and a service sector study.

Evaluation of the Youth Housing and Reintegration Service, After Care and Supervised Community Accommodation initiatives

Tony Eardley, Jane Bullen, Darryl Cronin, Andrew Griffiths, Margaret Raven, Jen Skattebol, Denise Thompson

Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services

This project is an evaluation of a set of linked initiatives aimed at reducing youth homelessness in Queensland by helping vulnerable young people who have left State care or custody to transition to greater stability and independence.

Evaluation of drug and alcohol programs for offenders or people at risk of offending in support of the National Indigenous Law and Justice framework

kylie valentine, Andrew Griffiths (SPRC), Tracy Cussen (Australian Institute of Criminology)

Attorney Generals Department

This project, led by the Australian Institute of Criminology, involves an evaluation of six alcohol and substance misuse rehabilitation programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Developmental work on the Foster Care Integrated Funding Model

Marilyn McHugh, kylie valentine

Berry Street

This project involves critiquing the Draft Foster Care Integrated Funding Model developed by Berry Street, Victoria; analysing the impact of the increased cost for the delivery of home-based care based on the Funding Model; and providing a comparative cost analysis of the model in relation to the direct and indirect costs of caring.

Best practice in placement of jobseekers with mental illness

Ilan Katz, Fiona Hilferty, BJ Newton

Campbell Page

The aim of this research is to provide information and recommendations about quality service provision that meets the needs of clients with mental health issues, as well as local employers.

Understanding the barriers to 13 and 26 week employment outcomes

Peter Whiteford, Myra Hamilton, Natasha Cortis, Jane Bullen

Campbell Page

This project investigates factors at the individual and labour market levels that affect exit from or retention in

employment following a job placement by an employment services provider.

Long-term unemployed and jobless people: a literature review and pilot study

Deborah Brennan, Myra Hamilton, Jen Skattebol

Campbell Page

The project will provide literature and interview evidence about the issues faced by long-term unemployed and jobless people and those who work with them to find secure and sustainable employment.

Employment requirements of Australia's major industries

Trish Hill, Myra Hamilton

Campbell Page

This project explores what is known about the labour and skills requirements of employers within Australia's six major employing industries for entry level and low to moderate skill level positions.

Care to work? Expanding choice and access to workforce participation for mature-aged women carers

Bettina Cass, Trish Hill, Cathy Thomson

The HC Coombs Policy Forum

This project explores an integrated suite of policies for a preventative approach to enhance mature-aged women's participation in the labour market, with a particular focus on those with caring responsibilities.

Experience of Irregular Maritime Arrivals detained in immigration detention facilities

Ilan Katz, Abi Powell, Sandra Gendera (SPRC), Tricia Deasy, Erik Okerstrom (Australian Survey Research)

Department of Immigration and Citizenship

This research examines how detention centre organisational culture affects the experiences of Irregular Maritime Arrivals and what other factors are important in facilitating the wellbeing of detainees.

The direct costs of children

Bruce Bradbury, Denise Thompson

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

This project reviews existing literature to develop a new modelling framework that will enable the simulation and testing of child cost estimates relevant to family payment and income support programs.

Supported living services post implementation review

Karen Fisher, Sandra Gendera, Ariella Meltzer, Rosemary Kayess (SPRC), Sally Robinson (Southern Cross University)

NSW Department of Family and Community Services, Ageing Disability and Home Care

The project reviews the redevelopment of three large residential disability services for effectiveness and includes lessons for future redevelopment and a quality of life study to determine sustained improvements.

Advice to the NSW Child Death Review Team on measuring socioeconomic status; and geographic analysis and reporting of child mortality

Peter Saunders

NSW Ombudsman's Office

The project will review existing methodologies for measuring socioeconomic status (SES) in the academic literature and the indicators used previously by government bodies to explore the linkages between child deaths and SES. It will propose an approach that will be considered for future use by the NSW Child Death Review Team.

Other grants

We can't afford not to: supporting young people within their families and communities from early adolescence to early adulthood

Kristy Muir, Lyn Craig

Australian Research Council Linkage Grant with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations and the Foundation for Young Australians

This project follows young people and their families for three consecutive years to explore how to best support them within their families and communities to remain fully engaged economically and socially.

Collaborative Research Network: policy and planning research for sustainable regions

Deborah Brennan, Bettina Cass, Jen Skattebol

Collaborative Research Network between SPRC and Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University funded by the Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

The objective of this project is to develop high-quality, internationally-recognised collaborative research in policy and planning for sustainable regions, with a special focus on children, young people and families.

Research scholar news

The SPRC is delighted to welcome a new PhD student, Jan Idle, in Semester 1, 2012. Jan's supervisors are Jen Skattebol and kylie valentine, and her research topic has the provisional title *Making community: participant experiences of the YWCA In-school mentoring program*. Research into mentoring programs has focussed on issues such as best practice and educational and social outcomes of mentoring but has failed to pay attention to the 'mentoring moment' as a way of making community. Jan's thesis aims to document the complex space of mentoring relationships and community in addressing social

inclusion, and school and community partnerships, through research into participant experiences.

PhD Student Zahra Ghorbani from Community Oral Health, Shahid Beheshti University of Medical Sciences, Iran, visited the SPRC from March to May and worked with Professor Peter Saunders. Her research topic is inequalities in oral health and dental care utilisation in Iran.



Zahra Ghorbani.
Photo: private

New publications

SPRC reports

kylie valentine and Fiona Hilferty (2011)

Why don't multi-agency child welfare initiatives deliver? A counterpoint to best practice literature
SPRC Report 01/12

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/SPRC_Research_Report_multiagencyreview_FINAL.pdf

Sally Robinson, Sandra Gendera, Karen R. Fisher, Natalie Clements and Christine Eastman (2011)

Evaluation of the Self Directed Support Pilot second report

SPRC 10/11

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/SDS_Evaluation_FINAL_report_March_2012.pdf

Denise Thompson (2011)

Service and support requirements for people with younger onset dementia and their families: literature review

SPRC Report 09/11

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/1Alzheimers_YOD_lit_rev_FINAL_DT_Oct11final.pdf

Occasional paper

Denise Thompson, Karen R. Fisher, Christiane Purcal, Chris Deeming and Pooja Sawrikar (2011)

Community attitudes to people with disability: scoping project

FasHCSIA Occasional Paper Number 39

<http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/about/publicationsarticles/research/occasional/Pages/op39.aspx>

Research reports

Pooja Sawrikar (2011)

Culturally appropriate service provision for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and families in the New South Wales (NSW) child protection system (CPS) final report

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/CALD_families_in_CPS_Final_Report.pdf

Pooja Sawrikar (2011)

Culturally appropriate service provision for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and families in the New South Wales (NSW) child protection system (CPS) Interim Report 3: Interviews with CALD carers and DHS staff

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/CALD_families_in_CPS_Interim_Report_3.pdf

Pooja Sawrikar (2011)

Culturally appropriate service provision for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) children and families in the New South Wales (NSW) child protection system (CPS) Interim Report 2: Case file review report

http://www.sprc.unsw.edu.au/media/File/Report_Cald_Families_LitRvw.pdf

To join our e-mail list and receive the SPRC newsletter twice per year as well as information about SPRC events, publications and projects, please send an e-mail to: majordomo (majordomo@explode.unsw.edu.au), with nothing in the subject line and only the text 'subscribe sprc-notices' in the body.