

No. 3, 2004

August 2004

New Director For Office

Brenda Ratcliff is the new director of the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector.

She started on 1 July 2004.

This mother of two pre-school boys is passionate about supporting the community and voluntary sector.

“People who do voluntary work for a childcare centre or the local soccer club undertake extra responsibility on top of the demands of their daily lives to make their community a better place to be. We want to support that work in government.

“We know that there are at least 30,000 community organisations in Aotearoa/New Zealand and they struggle with issues like contracting with government, and

compliance and auditing costs. We are working with other government agencies and the sector itself to find solutions to these problems,” Brenda says.

The Office also has a role in supporting the work begun by the Community Sector Taskforce. “We want to support the work of whatever entity emerges from the process of consultation that the Taskforce has undertaken,” she says.

Brenda believes that relationships are crucial for success. “They are the key to getting anything done in this world. The relationships we in the Office have with people from the community sector and with government officials will

determine our success.”

Brenda came to the Office from Barnardos NZ, where she was

Director of Strategic Policy. Prior to that she was the Policy Manager at the Occupational Safety and Health Service, Department of Labour.

“I bring a knowledge of government processes and an understanding of what drives the community and voluntary sector. Our job is to help identify their common values. The bottom line is that people in both sectors want this country to be the best it can be,” she says.



Brenda Ratcliff.

New National Leadership Entity Proposed

A proposal to create a national leadership entity has been endorsed by a national hui for community, voluntary and tangata whenua groups.

Over 80 people participated in the two-day hui, held at the end of May in Hamilton.

Participants considered feedback from the 33 regional, sector, tangata whenua, Pacific and ethnic peoples' meetings held throughout the country prior to the national hui.

According to Community Sector Taskforce (Taskforce) Chairperson Gill Genet, the entity will co-ordinate and act as a focal point for community, voluntary and tangata whenua organisations on sector wide issues. It will also oversee capacity building projects. “It will need the ongoing support of the sector, be non-aligned, independent of government and operate within a Tiriti/Treaty framework,” Gill says.

A broad structure for the entity was also endorsed by

the national hui. “There will be two ‘houses’ – Tangata Whenua and Tangata Tiriti – and each will work at a strategic level establishing sector wide priorities and projects. The two houses will be linked by a smaller mechanism, a work room, where the operational work will be done,” Gill says.

The Taskforce, which finished its work in June, is now establishing a transition team to progress a national leadership entity. The goal is to have it operating by December 2004.

At the hui Gill paid tribute to the work of the Taskforce saying it had helped the sector take a huge first step in establishing a national entity. “While there is still plenty to do, we cannot underestimate the importance of the foundations that have been established. We have had lots of support from the sector and have heard their clear message to get on and make it happen quickly.”

OCVS Welcomes New Family And Community Services



OCVS has welcomed the formation of the new Family and Community Services, which will focus specifically on co-ordinating the many services that are available to families.

The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector (OCVS) has welcomed the formation of the Ministry of Social Development's (MSD) newest service group, Family and Community Services.

OCVS Director Brenda Ratcliff is looking forward to working with the new service. "We are pleased Family and Community Services will focus specifically on co-ordinating the many

services that are available to families."

The new service, which started on 1 July 2004, aims to strengthen families by strengthening the delivery of community support services to families. It also aims to improve the quality of information and advice for families.

This is a different role from OCVS, also within MSD, which focuses on improving relationships between government agencies and the community and voluntary sector. The sector is made up of a diverse range of organisations including sport, recreation, health, education, arts and faith-based. Tangata whenua, Pacific and ethnic peoples' organisations are also part of the sector.

Family and Community Services is working with the Family Services National Advisory Council, which provides a forum for stakeholders to participate in the development of a Strategy for Families, as well as being an ongoing vehicle for consultation and information sharing.

The Council includes members from key government departments including health, education and housing, non-government organisations such as Plunket, Barnardos and Relationship Services, as well as Iwi/Māori and Pacific peoples' groups.

Brenda applauds the establishment of the Advisory Council, which she says represents a positive partnership between government and non-government agencies.

"We are looking forward to developing a strong working relationship with the Family and Community Services," Brenda says.

For more information on the Family and Community Services view www.familyservices.govt.nz

Briefly

A partnership between the government and the community sector has resulted in a research forum being reactivated. The Community Sector Research Forum will involve people from the community and voluntary sector and Government and universities who are keen to increase information on the sector, by undertaking relevant research-related projects or promoting research. The Forum will be convened four times a year by the Association of Non-Government Organisations of Aotearoa (ANGOA) with assistance from the Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector. For more information contact angoa@paradise.net.nz.

Another partnership between the community and government in the pipeline involves updating information on managing liability and risk. The need for resources in this area was highlighted in the Volunteer Policy Project which has been run over the past two years by the Ministry of Social Development. The Office for the Community and Voluntary Sector and the NZ Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations (NZFVWO) are discussing pooling resources to update the existing risk management manual produced by NZFVWO. The next issue of OCVS News will have a progress report.

Responses to a survey of community and voluntary sector organisations on the usefulness of health and safety guidelines produced by Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) show they have been a useful resource. OSH surveyed a cross-section of organisations to evaluate the usefulness of guidelines distributed last year. The survey found the guidelines, 'Working Safely For Your Community: Health and Safety Guidelines for Community and Voluntary Organisations', were being used to update or formalise current practices, and to further understanding of individual provisions and obligations. However, the evaluation also showed that many organisations remain unsure of their obligations, in particular the difference between volunteer obligations and employer obligations. OSH will review the guidelines to clarify that issue, and add specific information on hazards (eg stress and fatigue, mobile workers, and health and safety on the marae). They will also consider other formats, including alternative language versions, electronic versions, removable fact sheets and sample sheets. The guidelines can be found at www.osh.dol.govt.nz/news/whatsnew.shtml or contact Frances.Butcher@dol.govt.nz, phone 04 915 4041.