

# The Jobs Letter

No. 143

26 April 2001

*Essential Information on an Essential Issue*

## KEY

COMMUNITY AND  
VOLUNTARY SECTOR  
REPORT

STUDENT WORK SCHEME

MEDICAL SHORTAGES

CHRISTCHURCH SHORTAGES

DAVID WHYTE

## DIARY

### 1 April 2001

Benefits, superannuation and other pensions rise today as part of the annual cost of living adjustment. The after-tax increase is nearly 4%. The community wage for a single person rises \$5.92 to \$154.56/wk. The superannuation for a couple rises \$13.82 to \$360.82/wk.

### 2 April 2001

Qantas Airways in Australia will shed 220 executive and middle management jobs during the next two weeks. In February, Qantas announced it would cut 1,000 jobs as it tried to meet the challenges of increased domestic competition, rising fuel costs and a lower Australian dollar.

### 3 April 2001

Other staff will soon follow the departure of five top managers from Affco, one of NZ's largest meat exporters. Affco employs 3,000 people and new CEO Sam Lewis says that staff cuts, as well as salary cuts, are inevitable.

The WestpacTrust's latest *Economic Overview* warns exporters to expect a halving of their US sales, due to the slowdown of the US economy. European telephone equipment manufacturer Alcatel SA plans to cut 1,200 jobs or 5% of its US workforce.

- The Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party has reported to government. It says that, at this stage, it **does not support a formal partnership agreement** between government and the community sector (as was envisioned when the working party was convened last year). However, the working party suggests there is "... substantial and important work that can be done to develop a robust and respectful framework of relationships."

The 204-pg report "*Communities and Government — Potential for Partnership*" is critical of the "culture" of government and its treatment of the community sector over the last two decades. It recommends a number of significant changes to be made that will **improve the relationship between government and the community sector** in the future.

The report acknowledges that "... a substantial change in funding delivery practice and underlying relationships is required. The functioning of a healthy, democratic society is dependent on both the community sector and government having the resources to work together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes."

- In drawing up its recommendations, the working party canvassed community service providers, accepted submissions and held over two dozen meetings that asked participants: What would a good relationship between the government and your organisation look like? What are the existing barriers to such a relationship and how could they be removed?

This process revealed a **deep frustration** experienced by the community sector. A common thread in the report is that community views and concerns have been met with unresponsiveness and a "culture of contempt" from government departments. The report: "There is a sense that the voluntary sector is considered to be second rate."

The working party concluded there were **five significant problems** in the relationship between government and the community sector:

— concerns about the relationship between the Crown and iwi and how it effects the Maori desire for self-determination and control over their resources and the policies affecting their future and wellbeing;

— a sense of having been excluded from key policy decisions and a desire for a more participatory style of government;

— frustration with government funding arrangements, in particular strong opposition to the "contracting model";

— a concern about the health and strength of the community sectors and their ability to pursue their own goals;

— "the "culture of government" — the attitudes and behaviour of government agencies and officials and their lack of understanding of iwi and the community sector.

- The report highlights fundamental areas of concern:
  - iwi/Maori groups do not want to be grouped into the broad category of

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**The Jobs Letter** : ESSENTIAL INFORMATION and MEDIA WATCH on JOBS

EMPLOYMENT, UNEMPLOYMENT, the FUTURE of WORK, and related EDUCATION and ECONOMIC issues

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# The Jobs Letter

## DIARY

4 April 2001

Sawmilling company Keighleys Stillwater Ltd announces plans to lay off 47 staff at two South Island mills due to a reduction in Australian sales. The Stillwater sawmill on the West Coast and the Kaiapoi sawmill in Canterbury will share the job losses.

Winz East Coast Public Relations advisor Calvin Robinson says that relaxing the stand-down period for fruit pickers has improved the supply of pipfruit pickers in the Hawkes Bay this year. Some growers say that fruit picking is going well and that Winz had pulled out the stops to help supply workers. Other growers, however, report that they can't get through to their Winz contacts on the phone and they have had accuracy problems with contact details of potential workers. The lack of job boards in Winz offices is also seen as an impediment to pickers linking up with growers.

Australian academics Bob Birrell and Virginia Rapson have analysed the new trans-Tasman social security agreement, signed last week by Minister of Trade Negotiations Jim Sutton, and have concluded the agreement favours Australia.

5 April 2001

Steve Maharey reports there are 24,048 fewer unemployed registered with Winz compared to 18 months ago.

Responding to the same Winz figures, Muriel Newman highlights the increase in the number of long term unemployed. Currently, over half of the registered unemployed have been without a job for more than one year.

Staff shortages at Auckland hospital's radiation therapy department means that one of the five machines is sitting idle while patients are waiting up to 20 weeks to be treated. Radiation therapists are in short supply throughout the world.

8 April 2001

The unemployment rate in the US rises to 4.3%.

9 April 2001

Australian newspaper job ads fell 7.9% in March, according to the ANZ monthly survey. The fall is on top of a 10% decline in February. Newspaper job ads are 32.8% lower than at this time next year.

"community groups" but that they should have a special relationship with the Crown based on the Treaty of Waitangi.

— many people in the community sector feel their expertise and knowledge is ignored by government agencies and that the state sectors reforms have distanced government decision making from them.

— the contracting model of funding is particularly disliked. It creates a power imbalance between the funder and the funded; the community sector has no ability to influence the funding cycles; it creates an inappropriate environment of competitiveness among community organisations; and it takes a piecemeal or "spare parts" approach to welfare services rather than a holistic one.

— there is a need to strengthen the community sector. "Many organisations face a constant battle to break even. Beneath the surface, the viability of many groups is uncertain."

- The working party says it **did not find coherence across the community sector**. Because of this, it has not recommended that the government signs a formal agreement with the community sector.

The report: "Developing effective working relationships between government and iwi/Maori, community and voluntary organisations requires both immediate steps and a substantial commitment over time — a "journey" in which the partners work together to develop trust and understanding through shared experience. The working party acknowledged the pressure from many in government and in the community for visible and specific action right now. This initial review has, however, demonstrated the need for ongoing development of particular streams of work to enable stronger relations to emerge and flourish ..."

- The working party proposes that the government **shows its good faith** by preparing and signing a *Statement of Intent* that indicates a commitment to building its relationship with the community sector. The other immediate recommendation is for the government to take "...steps that will contribute immediately to rebuilding effective relationships."

The longer-term proposal is for the government to set up a Steering Group to co-ordinate what it calls the Way Forward. The report recommends establishing a high level, highly mandated body, "such as the Treaty of Waitangi Commission," to consider such issues as iwi self-determination, constitutional change and ways of implementing agreed outcomes.

- Further recommendations in the working party's report include:
  - *Developing participatory democracy* by establishing a government funded, community-run database of iwi and other community individuals who are available to undertake policy and research work. The community sector should be routinely considered, along with other specialists, when advice is prepared for crown ministers.
  - *Reviewing resourcing and accountability arrangements* by making the reporting requirements appropriate to the level of funding; contracts assuming three to five years of funding; contracts allowing for a component that recognises administrative and overhead costs; and government funders reporting only the proportion of outcomes of a project that they have actually funded. The report also recommends that the COGs budget be immediately be increased 50% (to \$15 million) and the Contributory Funding pool be transferred away from CYPS to where it can be focused on community initiated activities.
  - *Strengthening the community sector* by providing viable funding for social service umbrella groups.

# The Jobs Letter

## DIARY

10 April 2001

NZ newspaper job ads rose 2.5% in March, according to the ANZ monthly survey.

All Central Institute of Technology staff are being made redundant. The Upper Hutt campus is to be closed mid-year with teaching programmes incorporated into the Hutt Valley Polytechnic, which will be renamed the Wellington Institute of Technology. While about 120 positions will be created at WIT, a net of 90 full-time equivalent positions will be lost.

Christine Rankin files suit against the State Services Commission alleging political interference in the commission's decision not to reappoint her as CEO of Winz once her contract expires in July.

11 April 2001

State Services Minister Trevor Mallard announces the merging of Winz and the Ministry of Social Policy into a new Ministry of Social Development.

A WestPacTrust survey of household wealth finds that NZers are 2.4% poorer than they were this time last year. The decline reflects a drop in house values and an increase in personal borrowing.

The Auckland District Health Board reports it has 450 staff vacancies.

A review of Rotorua's Wairiki Institute of Technology recommends staff cuts of 30 to 40 people.

13 April 2001

The PSA says it is disappointed with the announcement to re-merge the Ministry of Social Policy and the Department of Work and Income, saying the decision has been rushed through without consultation or adequate thought. PSA national secretary Richard Wagstaff says: "The assurances of the Ministers of State Services and Social Services do not stop immediate anxiety for public service workers about job security. The uncertainty and distraction that a restructuring causes is disabling for the work at hand and unwelcome for our members".

A former Dunedin Winz worker is sentenced to 18 months in prison for stealing money from the department while responsible for administration and payment of student allowances.

— *Improving the ability of central government to understand and work with community organisations* by seeing that when recruiting staff, government departments acknowledge work experience in the community sector; departmental staff training includes introduction to relevant community organisations; and quality training of departmental staff ensures that information provided over the counter is consistent and does not vary according to 'who you get in the office on the day'.

- The full "*Communities and Government Potential for Partnership*" report is available on the web at

<http://www.mosp.govt.nz/voluntary/workingpartyreport.shtml>

- The coalition government will soon launch a \$2-to-\$3 million scheme to **help students find jobs**. The *Sunday Star-Times* reported earlier this month that Alliance leader and Economic Development Minister Jim Anderton will be setting aside up to \$3 million of economic development money for a government-industry drive to get students work, especially in industries with labour shortages such as forestry and dairy farming.

Anderton says that he is considering introducing **job subsidies** for the programme, but would prefer to get students into fully paid jobs. The government and industry could meet some of the costs if students needed to travel to work.

Anderton is also sounding out the possibility of establishing a "national centre for work experience", based on a model used in the UK. This centre would work with the private sector to help students develop skills in their chosen field, with the possibility of gaining a permanent position. It could also offer scholarships to help pay for further education costs.

- Meanwhile, Guyon Espiner of the *Sunday Star-Times* reports that the Alliance has **lost its battle** with Labour to restore the **Emergency Unemployment Benefit (UEB)** to students. Student leaders have vowed not to let another summer break go by without students having access to the income support. Reinstating the EUB for students would cost \$11—\$18 million.

Anderton says that "having fought the good fight" on this issue, he has now turned his attention to a real drive for jobs for students. Anderton: "If we can't win that battle, there needs to be some other initiative that deals proactively with this problem students have, and I'm turning my attention to something more productive than the EUB..."

- The Auckland District Health Board has **450 staff vacancies** — a number equal to nearly 7% of its workforce. A report to Parliament's health committee shows that the biggest number of vacancies is amongst nursing staff, where there are 280 jobs unfilled. Other shortages: 35 jobs for medical staff, 90 for technical staff, 25 for "hotel" workers and 20 for administrative personnel.

Staff shortages are a problem for Auckland Healthcare in a number of key areas including pathology, anaesthetics, mental health and radiation oncology. Auckland Healthcare was this month forced to cut cancer treatment because a chronic shortage of radiation staff had reached crisis point. At Auckland Hospital, the proportion of patients waiting for treatment for four weeks or more rose from 46% at June last year to 64% at the end of last month.

- The NZ Medical Association is also warning that **urgent action is needed** to prevent **a medical staffing crisis** across the country. A Medical Council survey released last month reveals that there has been only limited growth in the number of general practitioners over the last three years, and that fewer NZ-trained medical graduates are staying to work in this country. NZMA Chairman

## DIARY

14 April 2001

Deputy PM Jim Anderton says he is working on a proposal to provide free health care to all NZ'ers under 18 years old.

16 April 2001

Women's Refuge leader Merepeka Raukawa-Tait says she would like to become head of the new Ministry of Social Development.

The People's Advocacy Society offers Christine Rankin a job on one of her department's work schemes.

The recent cost-of-living increase for beneficiaries and pensioners has put some people over the income threshold to qualify for subsidised health care.

One year after the US doubled the number of visas it was offering to attract foreign information technology engineers, the need for foreign workers has all but gone. The Information Technology Association of America says that the combination of the industry needing 50% fewer new employees than anticipated and an increase in IT graduates from US universities means that new foreign IT engineers are no longer required.

17 April 2001

Christine Rankin is seeking \$818,000 in damages from the state, claiming political interference in the State Services Commissioner's decision not to reappoint her when her contract runs out in July. She is seeking damages, plus costs ... and also is seeking an order requiring the Commissioner to consider her for reappointment.

NZ and Hong Kong agree to launch negotiations on a bi-lateral free trade deal.

18 April 2001

The collapse of Hartner Construction in Auckland has cost over 1,000 jobs and, as a result, at least eight other companies are folding. Job losses are likely to be even higher as disputes arbitrator Geoff Bayly says at least 14 more companies have recently approached insolvency agencies.

Dr Pippa MacKay says that the survey confirms fears that "... not only is NZ a thriving exporter of wine and fashion, but of doctors as well."

MacKay: "High student debt not only encourages newly graduated doctors to work overseas, for those who remain it affects their choice of specialty. Hospitals struggle to attract registrars in many areas. Rural and regional areas are hit particularly hard by shortages. For resident medical officers, low pay, excessive hours, unreasonable conditions, and the increasing need to cover staff shortfalls, now combined with high student debts, are all good reasons to start looking overseas."

- The National party claims that "**green dollar**" trading is costing the government millions of dollars in tax every year. Green dollar trading systems facilitate the barter of goods and services between members, instead of paying for transactions with ordinary money.

The National Party's revenue spokesperson, Annabel Young, is calling on the Inland Revenue Department to investigate those involved in the practice, which she is claiming makes up "... a substantial portion of the estimated \$9 billion black market". Young says the IRD needs to ensure people in the green market are paying tax on their transactions, and recommends it should carry out "sting" operations.

- The **Community Employment Group** (CEG) has announced its appointment of **regional managers**. They are: **Te Tai Tokerau (Auckland)**: Amokura Panoho, formerly a CEG field co-ordinator. **Waikato/East Cape**: Pierre Henare, formerly a CEG field co-ordinator. **Taranaki/Nelson/Marlborough**: Steve Bill, formerly manager of Workplace Learning – a Trust involved in Literacy and Numeracy training. **Canterbury/Otago/West Coast**: Jay Sepie, formerly CEG interim business analyst.
- Earlier this year, there was widespread concern reported in the media in Christchurch that **a shortage of qualified and experienced workers** was restricting employment and business growth in the city. In response to these concerns, the Christchurch Taskforce on Poverty commissioned a survey to quantify the extent of the shortage.

The survey was undertaken by a team of researchers at the University of Canterbury led by **Dr Paul Dalziel**. It took the number of employers who advertised one or more vacant positions in the *Christchurch Press* one Saturday in January as its survey population. These employers were all contacted and asked to complete a questionnaire. Dalziel reports that the response rate was very high (73%), indicating perhaps just how important this issue is for Christchurch employers.

Despite the widespread view that there was a shortage of qualified and experienced workers in Christchurch, **only 4% of the employers surveyed said it was "impossible"** to fill an advertised vacancy with a suitably qualified person. More than half the surveyed respondents, however, described the task of filling their vacancies as "difficult".

Other findings in the survey:

- Nearly two-thirds of the applicants for advertised occupations in the survey were considered to be not suitable by the advertising employer
- Just over two thirds of advertised occupations required experience in a similar job, perhaps at a lower level
- Only 38% of the advertised occupations required formal qualifications.
- "Employer demand for Qualifications and experience in Christchurch, January 2001" Preliminary report prepared for the Mayoral Taskforce on Poverty by Paul Dalziel, Jane Higgins and Michael Drummond (February 2001)

## REVIEW

# REDEFINING WORK AND IDENTITY

OUR GREATEST OPPORTUNITY for personal discovery and growth, according to David Whyte, is the thing we most often want to get away from: our work. It's where people, spend the majority of their time, and it's where many spend much of it wishing they were somewhere else, doing something else. And it's where people often spend their time not being present, not being themselves. Whyte: "As human beings we are one part of creation that can refuse to be itself. Our bodies can be present in our work, but our hearts, minds and imaginations can be placed firmly in neutral or engaged elsewhere..."

Yorkshire-born poet David Whyte is the best-selling author of *The Heart Aroused* (pub. 1994) and is one of the few poets to have taken his perspectives on work and creativity into the field of organisational development, where he consults with many leading Fortune 500 companies.

Whyte points out that we more often think of family, relationships, friends, religion, or spiritual practices as the domains in which our soul life is defined and refined — places where our personal identities are nurtured and shaped. This book explores and reclaims our working lives as an opportunity for fully inhabiting our individuality and maximizing our creativity.

The author argues that one of the often missed opportunities of our lives is to have what William Blake called "a firm persuasion" in our work — to feel that what we do is right for ourselves and good for the world at exactly the same time. With a unique blend of poetry, gifted storytelling, and personal experience, this book redefines work as a pilgrimage towards finding such "a firm persuasion".

*"This may be the most consoling piece of writing ever published on the subject of work."* — Paul Hawken, author of *The Ecology of Commerce*

- All of our great artistic and religious traditions take equally great pains to inform us that we must never mistake a good *career* for good work. Life is a creative, intimate and unpredictable conversation if it is nothing else, spoken or unspoken, and our *life* and our *work* are both the result of the particular way we hold that passionate conversation. In Blake's sense, a *firm persuasion*, was a form of *self-knowledge*; it was understood as a result, an outcome, a bounty that came from

paying close attention to an astonishing world and the way each of us is made differently and uniquely for that world. Blake saw the great powers of life working on us like a kind of permanent gravity field, the currents of life acting and pulling upon us according to our particular heft and spiritual weight, our makeup and our nature. To have a *firm persuasion*, according to Blake, we must come to know these currents that surround us in an intimate way and build a kind of faith from the directional movement that results from a close conversation with these elements.

- The great tragedy of speed as an answer to the complexities and responsibilities of existence is that very soon we cannot recognize anything or anyone who is not travelling at the same velocity as we are. We see only those moving in the same whirling orbit and only those moving with the same urgency.

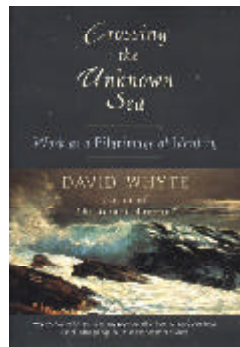
Soon we begin to suffer a form of amnesia, caused by the blurred vision of velocity itself, where those things germane to our humanity are dropped from our minds one by one. We start to lose sight of any colleagues who are moving at a slower pace, and we start to lose sight of the bigger, slower cycles that underlie our work. We especially lose sight of the big, unfolding wave form passing through our lives that is indicative of our central character.

On the personal side, as slaves to speed, we start to lose sight of family members, especially children, or those who are ill or infirm, who are not flying through the world as quickly and determinedly as we are. Just as seriously, we begin to leave behind the parts of our own selves that limp a little, the vulnerabilities that actually give us colour and character. We forget that our sanity is dependent on a relationship with longer, more patient cycles extending beyond the urgencies and madness of the office.

- We are reimagining our houses of belonging now, and one of the first to be reimagined is the world of work. We are attempting to make work more lifelike, more in the image of what we instinctively want for ourselves.

Every organization attempting to wake up to this newly youthful world is now asking for qualities from its people that are touchstones of their humanity. It is difficult to be creative and enthusiastic about anything for which we do not feel affection. If the aims of the company are entirely fiscal, then they will engage those whose affections are toward the almighty dollar. If they have a range of qualities or a sense of creative engagement to be found through their doors, they may get in return something more worthwhile from their people.

Companies need the contributing vitality of all the individuals who work for them in order to stay alive in the sea of changeability in which they find themselves. They must find a real way of asking people to bring these hidden, heartfelt qualities into the workplace. A way that doesn't make them feel manipulated or the subject of some five-year plan. They must ask for a real conversation.



## Crossing the Unknown Sea — Work as a Pilgrimage of Identity

by David Whyte

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# The Jobs Letter

## DIARY

19 April 2001

The Social Services Minister says he is happy with plans to form a new Ministry of Social Development in spite of papers that indicate he was initially reluctant. The papers, released under the Official Information Act, showed that Steve Maharey stated the proposal to merge the Department of Work and Income with the Ministry of Social Policy to form the new ministry was not well thought out and dealt with the social policy issues "very skimpily, or not at all".

The Reserve Bank lowers its baseline interest rate by a quarter of a percent to 6%.

The slowdown in the US and Australian economies is stifling confidence in South Island manufacturers. A NZIER survey says that 20% of South Island manufacturers expect to cut their payroll, however Canterbury Manufacturers Association CEO John Walley says he does not expect a wave of layoffs.

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*The Diary is sourced from our media watch of New Zealand daily and weekly newspapers.*

*Research sources for the main items in The Jobs Letter are available in our internet edition at [www.jobsletter.org.nz](http://www.jobsletter.org.nz)*

## VOICES

### on THE COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY SECTOR REPORT

*"Community organisations want fundamental, long-term change in their relationship with central Government. The need for a fundamental change is the key message from this report which examines how central government treats community organisations. In the last 15 years, under successive governments, community and voluntary organisations have felt significant anger and resentment at the way they have been dealt with. We heard very strong messages about this from communities from the top to the bottom of the country.*

*"They have been continually treated as though their experience and knowledge is second rate, treated with 'a culture of contempt.' They have been told what to do, how to do it and made fearful about criticising government policy. They have been put through extraordinary hoops to get relatively small amounts of money to deliver services for the benefit of their communities.*

*"What the community organisations are looking for is a fundamental long term change, of processes, of culture, of behaviour. They want to get past rhetoric to practical improvements which will start to build trust and mutual respect ..."*

—Dorothy Wilson, chair of Community and Voluntary Sector Working Party

*"The report provides a catalyst for very necessary change. The several strands of work it outlines provide a robust plan for the Government and the sector to work in partnership to give them a sustainable long-term base from which to build. The Government intends studying the report in detail and a formal Government response will be made in June ..."*

—Steve Maharey Minister of Community and Voluntary Sector

*"This is a thorough and robust report. The Working Party has obviously listened and reflected on the hurt and serious concerns that the sector has been voicing over the past decade. When put alongside the Mick Brown review of Child Youth and Family, there is*

*mounting pressure for the government to change the way it values and works with the community sector. These reports offer a platform to move forward and develop a more trustful and respectful relationship ..."*

—John Elvidge, chairperson of New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services

*"It presents a challenge for government to work in a co-ordinated way across government departments and political parties. This is something the community has been asking for, it requires a fundamental shift in current practices and an opportunity for government to demonstrate its commitment to the sector ..."*

—Don Borrie, Chairperson of New Zealand Council of Social Services.

*"The sector expects long term and lasting improvement in their relationship with government, and we want long term commitment to the recommendations in this report. We urge a cross party strategy to implement the recommendations ..."*

—Julie McGowan, President of New Zealand Federation of Voluntary Welfare Organisations.

*"The working party found widespread disenchantment and mistrust of the state's heavy hand. The sector's multifarious inhabitants are looking first for a statement of good intentions from the Government. If Mr Maharey wants the "trust, accountability and respect" he has said he seeks, he will have little alternative but to oblige.*

*"'Partnership' implies equals and, though the state cannot in the crunch be equal with subnational organisations, he will have to recognise their independence and offer participation in policy and decision-making, plus flexible outcomes-based funding.*

*"Mr Maharey personally should have little difficulty with this but he may find it hard to engender in some of his colleagues the risky shift of mentality it implies and requires. And, the working party has found, he will need a lot more work outside the bureaucracy to develop workable new mechanisms ..."*

—Colin James, New Zealand Herald columnist

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