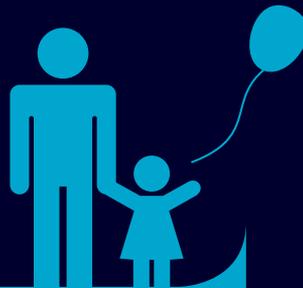


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# Connecting

RESEARCH  
AND SOCIAL  
POLICY



BRIEFING TO THE  
INCOMING MINISTER FOR  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

OCTOBER 2014

# Kia Ora

We are the Families Commission and operate as SuPERU (the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit), an autonomous Crown entity governed by the Crown Entities Act 2004. We are required to provide an independent perspective while being mindful of Government policy.

We were established by the Families Commission Act 2003 to act as an **advocate for the interests of families generally**, and now also have responsibility to **monitor and evaluate programmes and interventions** in the social sector and to **provide social science research into key issues**.

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“

[They] provide quality information with a focus on families, a focus no other department has.”

The Families Commission/SuPERU Stakeholders Survey 2014

WE GIVE YOU THE INFORMATION YOU AND  
THE SOCIAL SECTOR NEED TO MAKE

# SOUND DECISIONS

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## **WE CUT THROUGH TO THE KEY ISSUES SO YOU GET:**

- Dedicated, expert advice and evidence on issues facing families and whanau that is immediately useable.
- Faster answers to complex social problems: we are not bound to a single agency view so work across the whole social sector, and we understand the important issues that affect people's lives.
- A knowledgeable broker between the worlds of research and policy. We connect the two. We identify the knowledge gaps.

## **WE ARE ACTIVELY CONNECTED TO SCIENTIFIC EXPERTS AND NEW ZEALAND COMMUNITIES.**

We make good use of our scientific, ethics and population reference groups which demonstrates that we are connected to specific communities and ensures our work remains relevant.

# SOCIAL SECTOR INTERVENTIONS THAT MAKE A *difference*



The Parenting Review was a very good piece of work. They are shaping the Growing Up Study in a good direction. It's put a lot of effort into trying to get more focused reporting out of the study."

The Families Commission/SuPERU Stakeholders Survey 2014

We increase the value of your investment in social sector interventions so that they make a difference for families.

Household structure at two years of age



PARENT ALONE



TWO PARENTS ALONE



PARENT(S) WITH EXTENDED FAMILY



PARENT(S) WITH NON-KIN

## What we've done recently

## How it's being used

Effective parenting programme review



Informing purchasing decisions by government agencies, such as the **Ministry of Social Development (MSD)**

Examination of what school-based relationship education programmes work



**Ministry of Education** developing guidelines on best practice relationship education for use in schools

Assessment of two trial community-based Children's Teams<sup>1</sup>



Informing the roll-out of further Children's Teams

Investing in Services for Outcomes (ISO) evaluation and evidence strategy (with MSD)



Ensuring future **MSD** investment decisions are evidence-based

Improved contract management of the Growing Up in New Zealand (GUiNZ) Longitudinal Study



Ensuring the study is focused on producing more policy-relevant research

Families and Whānau Status Report 2014



**New Zealand Defence Force** is developing ways to improve the wellbeing of its staff and families

Evidence2Action Symposium

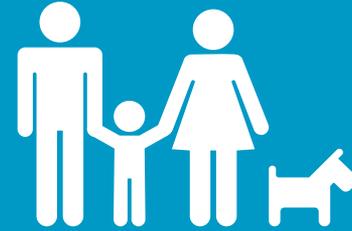


Greater focus by **MSD** on implementation in key social sector projects (such as ISO and the Children's Action Plan)

<sup>1</sup> The establishment of local Children's Teams is part of the Government's Children's Action Plan that has arisen out of The White Paper for Vulnerable Children. The Teams bring together frontline professionals working with children to protect vulnerable children and young people.

AND WE'RE  
JUST GETTING

*started.*



HERE'S SOME OF WHAT  
WE'RE CURRENTLY  
WORKING ON

Focus

The benefits

Evaluating the Youth Mental Health Project



Determining what's working to reduce and manage mental health issues in young people

Identifying characteristics of economic resilience in lower income households



Scoping an evaluation of the Children's Action Plan



Understanding the impact of the Children's Action Plan across its many parts

Giving advice on the potential value of the GUiNZ Longitudinal Study



Increasing the relevance of key research assets that will feed into policy decision-making across the social sector

## Focus

## The benefits

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Increasing the use of the GUINZ Study data



Ensuring decision-makers across the research, government, philanthropic and community sectors have the information they need to make more informed decisions

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Establishing a contestable evaluation fund for ISO and promoting the fund to NGOs



Improving the evidence base for 'what works'

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Engaging with other government agencies to determine research priorities for the social sector for the next three-five years, thereby reducing research duplication and addressing gaps



Ensuring social policy work is cognisant of the emerging important issues, and that the academic community is aware of government priority areas

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Developing a family violence research strategy



A co-ordinated approach across the social sector to addressing gaps in family violence research

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Producing advice on ways to improve the government social science funding system



Improving the effectiveness of the government social science funding system

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Developing the Families and Whānau Status Report 2015



Building a better understanding of the issues that affect families and whānau so social policies and programmes are better targeted

---

Developing and delivering a regular programme of evidence briefs on priority topics and for priority customers



Ensuring policymakers and practitioners get the latest evidence on critical issues in a way they can easily use

---

Optimising use of our scientific, ethics and population reference groups



Providing assurance of our research processes and expertise, and links to academic and community networks

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# RIGHT RESEARCH. BETTER SECTOR CAPABILITY FOR **QUALITY RESEARCH & EVALUATION**

We increase the value of your investment in social sector research and evaluation by ensuring the right research is done and that the sector has the capability to do quality R&E.

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## What we're working on

## The benefits

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Rigorous standards for evaluating social programmes (with the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association)



Better quality evaluation, more effective spend on programmes that work

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Guidelines for evaluation practitioners on how to apply the standards



Better use of resources and spend, more consistent and better quality evaluation

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Protocols for releasing social science research



Improving research use and standards, reducing duplication of work

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Social science research hub



Better sharing of research within the social science research community, better collaboration

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# ADDING TO THE SOCIAL SECTOR

# value

We've committed to having our work independently evaluated because we're confident about the value we add to the social sector.

An independent external evaluation of our work will be done in 2015/16 and is an unusual form of scrutiny for the public sector to voluntarily undertake. In the interim, we are also having an annual independent evaluation done of one of our top five projects.

“

The Families and Whānau Status Report series are very useful. Just keep them coming”

The Families Commission/SuPERU Stakeholders Survey 2014



Summary of the health and wellbeing of the GUiNZ kids at two years of age



**86%**

were in excellent or very good health



**10.5** hours

was the average length of sleep per night



**94%**

received at least some of their 15 month immunisations



**6**

was the average number of GP visits over the past year



Most common favourite first food:

**banana**

Growing Up in New Zealand: Now we are two: Describing our first 1000 days. June 2014

MINISTER, WE NEED YOUR

# HELP

*please*



YOU CAN  
HELP US  
**HELP YOU BY:**

1. **assisting** us to become a member of key decision-making forums, such as the Officials' Committee for the Cabinet Social Policy Committee and the Social Sector Forum, which is crucial if we are to have real influence in the social sector

2. [REDACTED]

3. [REDACTED]



# INITIAL DECISIONS/ ACTIONS WE NEED FROM YOU

4. [REDACTED]
5. **helping** us keep close to Government priorities and evidence needs in the social sector
6. **talking** to your colleagues about what we're doing that might be relevant to their portfolio areas and what we can offer
7. **encouraging** other government agencies to use us on a cost-recovery basis (eg to commission research and evaluation on priority topics for the social sector) as outlined in the Cabinet paper establishing SuPERU.

## Within the next six months:

- we anticipate **two new Board members** will need to be appointed by you. We will offer you advice on skill sets you might like to consider.

- [REDACTED]

Looking a little further ahead, we will also need you to appoint a **new Families Commissioner** by November 2015.

# WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

## about us

Stakeholders interviewed during the 2014 independent evaluation of our Effective Parenting Programmes review commented that the review has had practical application for them. It was seen:

- as providing **robust analysis** of the available evidence, despite the challenges of the timeframe it was working under
- to be an **important source** document for policy and commissioning.

“They have filled a vacuum of knowledge for me. I am running some purchasing trials and [they have] influenced the way I am thinking about those, so it's profound”

“[They] are dealing with academics and also trying to bridge that gap between them and government and I think they have broached that really well”

“I sense ... a willingness to come up with uncomfortable findings ... they are not simply the servants of the policy agenda, they are certainly prepared to raise difficult questions”

“Methodologically they are quite courageous – to have a major element of an evaluation based on case studies is interesting in itself, but the way the case studies are conceived is really quite innovative”



## STAKEHOLDER COMMENTS

The Families Commission/SuPERU  
Stakeholders Survey 2014

# MORE about us

The Families Commission Amendment Act 2014 made the Commission responsible for monitoring and evaluating programmes and interventions in the social sector, and providing social science research into key issues, programmes and interventions across that sector by:

- identifying evidence and research that will assist in determining or achieving the Government's policies and priorities in the social sector
- commissioning or managing contracts for social science research in the social sector on behalf of the Government and others
- setting standards and specifying best practice for monitoring and evaluating programmes and interventions in the social sector
- establishing and maintaining a database of social science research undertaken by or on behalf of the Government.

#### We recently revised our strategy

- which is set out in our Statement of Intent 2014-2018 (attached).



\$7.304m

(actual baseline funding)

+

\$2.565m

from MSD for contract management  
of the Growing Up in New Zealand  
Longitudinal Study.

**TOTAL**

\$9.869m

Crown funding  
from Vote Social  
Development

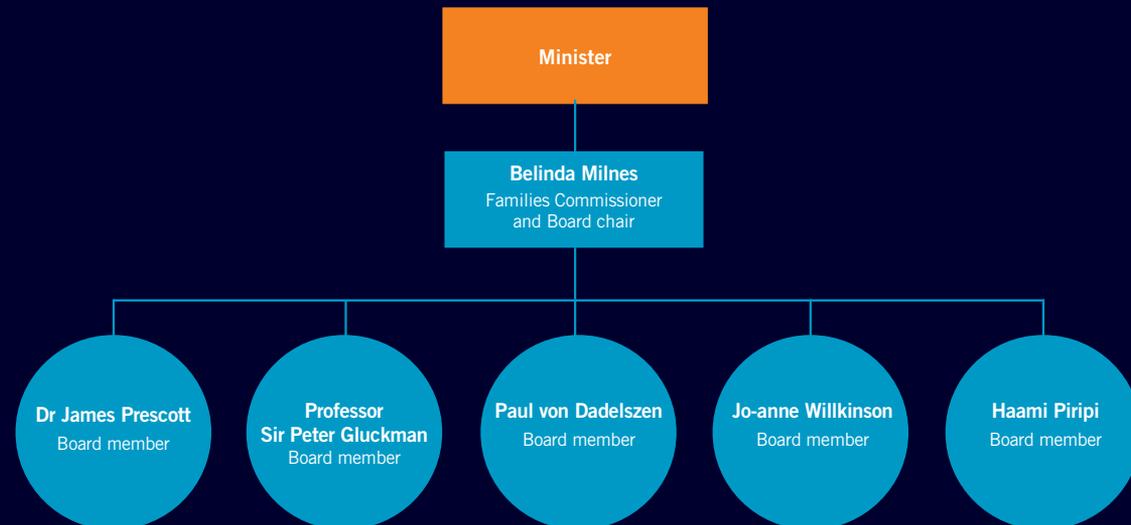
#### We receive Crown funding from Vote Social Development, non-departmental output expense – Families Commission

- \$7.304 million (actual baseline funding).
- \$2.565 million (funding transfer from MSD for contract management of the Growing Up in New Zealand Longitudinal Study).
- Total: \$9.869 million.
- This is a decrease from the \$10.305 million in Crown funding received in the previous year, which reflects the variable nature of the GUiNZ funding component.
- Transfer of the responsibility for monitoring, research and evaluation – including funding for the Growing Up in New Zealand Longitudinal Study – from Vote Social Development first took place in 2013/14 (\$3.181 million), with \$2.745 million included in Budget 2014/15.

## We are governed by a Board appointed by the Minister for Social Development

All operating decisions are made by, or under the authority of, the Board in accordance with the Families Commission Act 2003, the Families Commission Amendment Act 2014 and the Crown Entities Act 2004.

In accordance with the Families Commission Act 2003, the Board must have no fewer than three, and no more than seven, members. Board appointments are for three years, with reappointment permissible for a further term.



The Board meets every month (except January). It delegates day-to-day management to the Chief Executive, Clare Ward.

## Key contacts

**Belinda Milnes**  
Families Commissioner tel: 931 7080

**Clare Ward**  
Chief Executive tel: 917 7043

**Philip Aldridge**  
Director, Business Services and Operations

**Dr Gail Kelly**  
Director, Client Services and Sector Change

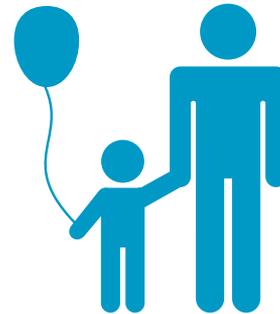
**Vasantha Krishnan**  
Director, Knowledge

**Donovan Clarke**  
Chief Advisor Māori

# Working with you-

## A 'NO SURPRISES' APPROACH

We keep your office in the loop on all issues, and provide regular reporting as follows:



### Monthly reports

- matters arising
- upcoming activities
- recent achievements.



### Quarterly reports

- how the Commission is tracking against the priorities and commitments in our Statements of Intent and Performance Expectations
- year-to-date financial performance.



### Statement of Intent

- our strategic intentions over a minimum four-year period
- next Statement of Intent due June 2017 (but may be provided earlier).



### Statement of Performance Expectations

- information on the Commission's reportable class of outputs
- how performance of the class of outputs is assessed
- annual forecast financial statements.



### Annual Report

- annual financial statements
- progress against the outcomes and measures in the Statement of Intent and the Statement of Forecast Service Performance
- reporting on any other information or measures necessary to provide the Commission's overall performance story.



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In anticipation of Official Information Act requests,  
this report cost \$4,400 (ex GST) to produce.