

The Mission *Message*

SCIENCE ADVICE

John Key has just received the interim report from his Chief Science Advisor, Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, into how to reduce the poor social and psychological development of many of our teenagers.

The report is well worth a read; accessible, not too long, and chock full of thought provoking ideas (download a copy from <http://www.pmcsa.org.nz/>).



Its greatest value, however, comes from having been constructed solely from research-derived, evidence-based, knowledge. Not common sense, not guesswork, not hypothesis, not political theory: but fact. To pick just a few:

Professor Gluckman writes: *Increasing evidence shows that non-cognitive performance of **adolescents** (social skills, emotional development, ability to persist with difficult tasks) is affected by the quality of **Early Childhood Education**.*

Perhaps “persisting with difficult tasks” helps children develop a sense of purpose (the long term)? Perhaps this is the activity, above all, that builds emotional resiliency?

*Programmes that prevent the onset of **child maltreatment** provide the greatest individual and **economic benefits**; including improving education, employment opportunities and parenting skills in at-risk families*

The explicit linking of social services with economic benefit is rare; yet those whom government so urgently wants to improve their productivity, are also those who live with impact of intergenerational disadvantage and dysfunction.

Traditional intergenerational transfer of knowledge, particularly around guiding children through adolescence, has been lost from many parts of society.

And, the Mission would argue, we no longer transfer an understanding of the value of doing the difficult things, of having a value-structure for our lives that takes the long view.

Finally, the report says that: *Prosociality in young people is affected by neighbourhood quality (independent of income). **Improving neighbourhood quality** through diverse measures may provide **positive results**.*

This is a frank confirmation of Malcolm Gladwell’s Tipping Point theory, but speaks also to our understanding that those who experienced dignity and respect, feel valued, are those most likely to reciprocate.

There is opportunity here, real opportunity. I encourage you to read the report, consider its implications for your work, and our community. And to wait, as the Mission is doing, to see what the final report provides in the way of provocation to and the evolution of how we engage with these young people.



Laura Black
Chief Executive

Recent Mission News

FLOAT YOUR VOTE

The Mission is hosting a meet-the-candidates (Float Your Vote) event with a speed dating twist this year. We hope this will be the beginning of a 10-15 year community building, social justice initiative.

The Mission is dismayed at the low level of voter participation in local body elections, and the even lower voter turnout in South Dunedin.



This lack of engagement in key democratic processes, inevitably leads to a loss of representation; we need look no further than the USA where congressmen and women we frequently only meet with those who have voted for them, to see the damaging effects of partial turnout.

So the Mission is putting our money where our mouth is, and getting involved!

We have included two posters with this Newsletter, one a general invitation to vote, and the other advertising Float Your Vote, the Mission would be grateful if you could find space to display both.

methodist
themission

Enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future

CARISBROOK

The Mission is pleased to see greater consideration being given to the future of Carisbrook than was originally signalled.

We have been advocating for Council to establish clearer criteria for the decision (cannibalising Council's seven-statement vision down to: **A Vibrant, Diverse, Rich & Generous Dunedin, Where All Flourish** helped focus our thinking), broadening the scope to embrace the whole of South Dunedin, and more consciously engaging with the residents around Carisbrook.



While we make no formal endorsement of Don Anderson's proposal (which includes Bathgate Park) at this time, we are very excited about what other "grand ideas" might surface, if time and invitation to craft them were available.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The Methodist Mission has raised concerns about the negative impact on the emerging economic recovery of decreasing access to second chance education. We know that the long-term impacts of a recession keep unfolding for some time after the economy begins to recover. Education and training seem a smart place to put our investment as a country while we wait for the recovery to arrive in ordinary people's lives, and yet we're seeing that access to education is actually decreasing.



The OECD reports that investing in education helps economic recovery, even going so far as to recommend governments consider this when setting education policy. The Secretary-General of the OECD, Angel Gurría said that "Investments in human capital ... contribute to recovery".

For some time we have had government tell us that the way out of NZ's low wage economy is to build the knowledge and skill capital of the country. The Statistics Department reported the Benefits of Tertiary Education and Training on wage rates as recently as late last year. We have an over 10% unemployment rate amongst the unskilled, over 25% for young Maori and Pacific people, 95,000 young people not in education, employment or training. Wouldn't this be an ideal time to throw open the doors to polytechnic and university study?

And it is a low-wage economy; figures from the last census that show Australian workers are on average paid 30% more than New Zealanders. According to our calculations,

over 1 in 5 of those in the workforce has no formal skills. How can the average family get ahead, if we can't change the unskilled, low-wage, picture?

Yet we see headlines like Polytech Funding Dries Up, University Halts Enrolments for Interest-Only Papers, and Literacy Courses Cuts Hurt. Last week, Minister Joyce also floated removing access for over 20 year olds to University, and of course there was the loss of community night classes to over 160,000 adults in 2009.

Hundreds of places have been cut from Youth Training, just as the government rolled out Youth Guarantee, and yet from information released under the Official Information Act, Youth Guarantee enrolments are running at less than 65% of allocation. We believe this is due not to a lack of need, but inappropriate entry and outcome requirements.

There is a tremendous need for education and tremendous opportunity to do something about our low-wage and low-skill economy. We invite government to urgently reconsider the restrictions on entry to second-chance education.

Something(s) to Think On

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In April this year the DCC's Economic Development Unit reported to Council on Dunedin's economic profile. The summary makes startling reading:

The Dunedin economy, as at the end of March 2009, employed almost 50,000 full-time equivalent workers, created \$4.45 billion in value added (GDP) across 10,985 businesses.

Compared to the Otago and national average economic performance to the end of March 2009 Dunedin had:

- slower population growth
- higher reduction in GDP
- higher job losses.

When compared over a 10 year period Dunedin had:

- slower population growth
- lower GDP growth
- slightly lower employment growth

The Mission has also reported to Council that if we as a city want to raise the feel and tone of South Dunedin, there is really only one strategy that will work: **raising the incomes of those that live in South Dunedin.**

Traditionally Social Service NGOs have engaged in economic development either through the creation of social enterprises or by



counting how much money we bring into the local community from central government.

The Mission is concerned that without a natural monopoly (or protected niche), heavy subsidies, or an established community & voluntary sector market (such as Early Childhood Education), Social Enterprises appear to struggle.

There is probably room too, for us, as a sector, to be careful in trumpeting the economic benefit of central government spend on our work, when it relates directly to disadvantage and poor life outcomes – the economic impact of our work is largely ameliorative, rather than economically entrepreneurial.

However, NGOs could offer business a great deal in the way of partnership, and this is an avenue that seems underexplored:

- We often engage with the same people – to us they are clients, to businesses they are employees or customers.
- Our objectives, at least on the surface, have much in common: both NGOs and businesses want people to be in a position to live functional, productive lives, where they are able to positively engage in opportunities and choice.

So why aren't we working together on EAP: lowering staff turnover and the amount of sick leave used (for self and dependents), increasing basic self management skills, and improving literacy?

Why aren't we partnering on a Customer Assistance Programme: help *before* customers are overwhelmed with their bills and debt?

GETTING TO “WHY”

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry said:

If you want to build a ship, don't drum up men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.

Simon Sinek has updated this thought on the TED website (http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action.html) in his talk *How Great Leaders Inspire Action*, by describing the process of starting with “Why”.

Sinek says that most leaders start with “What” they are going to do (usually at fairly awful length), migrate to “How” they are going to do it (bureaucratic detail takes over), but only sometimes discuss “Why” it should be done, and then often in passing.

He says, however, that inspiration, motivation, and achievement come from reversing the order, and starting with “Why”.

And while that isn't easy – do you even know the “why”? how do you describe it to others in a useful way? – Sinek's talk (and book) suggest that if you can't identify the why or describe it, then perhaps the thing doesn't actually need doing ...

RECESSION, RECOVERY, or A CORRECTION?

In the National Business Review of 9th July, Neville Bennett raises the appalling spectre of a double-dip recession. Others in the same edition carry warnings of a slow-down in “The Recovery”. Those who read the international papers and e-zines will know that anxiety is beginning to replace confidence as commentators and governments engage with the world economy.

You will have heard of the L, W, V and shaped predictions for the NZ and international economies (respectively a correction, a double dip, and a recovery).

The Mission's reading of shift is that the pundits are letting go of their hopes of a V, and beginning to acknowledge a W. More pain for longer, they are saying, but eventually good things will result.

But what if the international credit crunch and stock market crashes, the inflationary printing of money (particularly in the US), the reliance on monetary policy in New Zealand, and other factors (like the property bubble in farming, our atrocious balance of payments), mean that these are effectively new economic times?

That what we should be doing is dealing to a reality that is more and more showing itself to be a correction: a resetting with the higher inflation and higher unemployment that comes with a very long L-shaped recovery?

How would our services and our engagement as social service agencies change if we saw these times not as a short sharp event to be gotten to the other side of, but as a longer-term situation?

WINTER SUNSHINE

And now for a note on happiness! Vitamin D contributes to bone strength, a strong immune system, and good mental health.

Most people get their Vitamin D directly from sunlight (UV light in particular), that is: we “photosynthesize” our own supply.



Unfortunately, for those of us living in Dunedin, there is now evidence that during winter there is simply not enough UV radiation available for that to happen well, particularly for darker skinned people.

Happily, supplements are available both on prescription and from a number of health shops

A Bit of the Mission

SPAN Caversham, a friendly group of independent older people, has been meeting every Tuesday for over 20 years.

The group starts with a cuppa at 10.30 and then settles back to enjoy activities, speakers, or other organised events. There is no joining or membership fee, just a contribution of \$3 when we use the sunny lounge at the Presbyterian Church in Thorn Street.



Activities are coordinated by Kay, with the help of a number of regular attendees. There are weekly raffles, entertainers, and a couple of special outings each year (including our midwinter and Christmas lunches).

Those who would like to find out more can check the classifieds in the Star, or contact the Mission on 466 4600.

Support & Learning - Right Now

APPROACH COMMUNITY LEARNING

Restart Your Learning!

Adult Learning • Youth Training • Family Learning • Prisoner Education

Contact us TODAY at 177 Mornington Road, Dunedin
Phone 487 7959 or email acl@dmm.org.nz

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

Support for Families & Children

Early Learning Centre • 20 Free hours for 3 & 4 year olds • Edible Gardens • Wise Up Walk Tall • Holiday Programme

Contact us TODAY at 11a Wesley Street, Dunedin
Phone 455 1445 or email cfs@dmm.org.nz

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL SERVICES

Advocacy & Support

Home Support • Support & Advocacy Service • Community Support • SPAN Caversham Social Group

Contact us TODAY on 466 4600 or email css@dmm.org.nz

HOW TO HELP

Donations

The Methodist Mission relies upon the generosity of donors to help us maintain and develop our services.

If you would like to know how a donation could make a difference please contact Laura Black, the Chief Executive, on 466 4600, write to her at P O Box 2391, South Dunedin 9044 or email laurab@dmm.org.nz.

Work for Us

We are an equal opportunity employer and welcome applications from suitably qualified people in all walks of life. The Methodist Mission has a number of job vacancies at most times, which are normally advertised in the ODT. To find out what vacancies we have, please call us on 466 4600 or email admin@dmm.org.nz.

Remember

The Methodist Mission has been serving the Dunedin community since 1890. We are a social service agency of Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa, the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The vision of the Methodist Mission is of a fair, safe, caring and sustainable society where every citizen is valued and respected and enjoys equal opportunity to lead a fulfilled life. We promote social justice through partnerships that strengthen families and build fair and safe communities. In partnership with the network of Methodist social services agencies throughout Aotearoa, ours is a commitment to Creating Cycles of Hope®.

We use the airborne seed of the native New Zealand Clematis Paniculata, also called Puawhananga ("flower of the skies") as our emblem; the Maori harbinger of spring, a traveller to far-off places, a climber that grows in harmony with host trees of the forest: a gentle, free, adventurous plant that represents our commitment to enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future.

The Methodist Mission
Main Office Phone 03 466 4600
P O Box 2391
South Dunedin 9044
admin@dmm.org.nz

Issue No 6 - July 2010