



For whom the bell tolls

The sustainability of public social research institutions in New Zealand

APRIL 2018



Our purpose

The purpose of the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu) is to increase the use of evidence by people across the social sector so that they can make better decisions – about funding, policies or services – to improve the lives of New Zealanders and New Zealand’s communities, families and whānau.



Superu
PO Box 2839
Wellington 6140

Telephone: 04 917 7040
Email: enquiries@superu.govt.nz
Website: superu.govt.nz

Follow us on Twitter: [@nzfamilies](https://twitter.com/nzfamilies)
ISBN 978-1-98-854015-3 (print)
ISBN 978-1-98-854016-0 (online)

Like us on Facebook: Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit
Learn more at: superu.govt.nz

Foreword

In 2014 the Families Commission Act was amended to give the Families Commission a new function alongside its role as advocate for the interests of families (and whānau). In addition to advocacy, the Commission was made 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.

To make it clear that it was embarked on a new path, the Families Commission rebranded itself as the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, or Superu (the origins of the second 'u' are the stuff of legend, but it seems that an original typographical error caught the eye and approval of a key decision maker).

Superu thus joined a long line of initiatives in New Zealand, stretching well back into the twentieth century, aimed at boosting the use of research and evidence in the social sector. Few of these past initiatives have survived, and indeed Superu lasted less than three years before it was given notice that it too would be disestablished. Superu's work programme has subsequently been distributed among a number of other agencies, including the Social Investment Agency (SIA) which was launched on 1 July 2017. The SIA is responsible for overseeing and coordinating the government's social investment approach, which is itself under review.

This report was not commissioned to enter into the debate about social science, social research or social investment. Nor was it to fully analyse the reasons for Superu's demise. Rather, the underlying consultation was seen as a high level sweep of knowledge about a relatively narrow range of past social sector research initiatives, to identify

any generic factors contributing to their success or failure. The aim of this report is to inform future initiatives and improve their chances of success.

The aim of this report is to inform future initiatives and improve their chances of success

David Preston's institutional knowledge of the public sector and social research in New Zealand made him an ideal person to prepare the report. He delivered a quantum of work far in excess of that for which he was contracted, and I thank him for that. It must be stressed, however, that this report is not intended as the final word on the issues that have been raised. Such a claim would first of all be ruled out by the scope of the report, which does not encompass university research centres or private think tanks and consultancies. Nevertheless, the report is being published as part of Superu's legacy to the social sector, to promote learning from past experience and reflection and discussion about implications for the future.

A quote commonly attributed to Albert Einstein but probably not actually said by him refers to the folly of doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Hopefully, this report and the discussion it generates will help bring forward the day when New Zealand breaks the cycle of short-lived forays into the important field of broadly-based, applied social research.

Malcolm Menzies
Chief Executive
Superu

Preface

The primary focus is on social research institutions and programmes which were set up to aid social policy and enhance the effectiveness of social service delivery, particularly in the areas of health, education, social welfare and justice

This report is an overview of the histories of publicly funded social research institutions engaged in core social research in New Zealand. It is based on a series of interviews and analysis of documents such as annual reports, yearbooks and reports of previous enquiries.

The primary focus is on social research institutions and programmes which were set up to aid the development of social policy and enhance the effectiveness of social service delivery in New Zealand, particularly in the areas of health, education, social welfare and justice.

‘Core social research’ is defined as applied social research which uses evidence and aims to impact on the delivery of social services and development of interventions to improve outcomes for people. Also covered are a number of research policy reviews and the degree of impact they had on actual developments.

The terms of reference set by Superu for this report were to provide

“A history of agencies, programmes and other initiatives (e.g. reviews of the social sciences) which have attempted to boost the use of research and evidence in social policy. This will not be a history for the sake of history. Rather, it will aim to identify the common reasons why most of the previous attempts have not survived, so as to inform future initiatives.”

In the six weeks of research time contracted for this report it has been necessary to limit the scope covered to a short summary of a long and complex history of applied social policy research in New Zealand. The process indicates substantial scope for more detailed histories of the individual areas of social policy research and the associated institutions. Having said that, this report has allowed key factors to be identified which help explain why some social research institutions thrive while others have been closed. I have identified factors for success as well as those leading to institutional demise. These are set out in part 1 and then examined in more detail in part 2.

The work done here allows me to provide a short version of the evolution of social research capability in those institutions which have a long research history. For these and other entities, this report provides a snapshot of the current situation and recent developments evident in some social research institutions.

My focus has been on publicly funded entities which visibly link to public social policy development. University research institutes, market researchers and private sector research groups have not been included as their main orientation is not on applied social research, though some do provide contract research services to government departments. Similarly, Māori research outside the scope of Te Puni Kōkiri is not covered.



I am also aware that, in the past, there were entities such as the Alcoholic Liquor Advisory Council which could have been included in a wider study. Boundaries had to be drawn, however, on the work that could be carried out in the time allocated. In concordance with the terms of reference, the priority has been on identifying major New Zealand patterns.

My thanks to all the people who have assisted me in this report, most of whom are listed in the appendices.

David A Preston

Notes

1. Social research or social science research, if the latter term is preferred, is 'people' research. In this sense its focus differs from that of the physical and biological sciences. As the term 'people research' can cover almost anything, the focus of this report is on what may be called 'core applied social research': the study of people in the environment in which they live and work, and the impact of social services and social interventions on life outcomes for people. In particular, it is applied research in relation to the social policies and programmes of the public sector.
2. Throughout this report the term 'social research' has been preferred over the alternative term 'social science research'. It gives a more accurate and inclusive description of research reality in the public sector. For an in-depth explanation, see page 22.



Summary

1. Applied social research in New Zealand has traditionally been viewed as a low funding priority by the government despite high levels of spending on social programmes. Major reports on social research needs have had little impact on actual government decisions about the organisations doing the research and funding of social research.
2. Most social research units have grown inside the government ministries and departments responsible for delivering or advising on the delivery of these services, or in research institutions closely associated with these sectors and portfolios.
3. For large departments and agencies this development tends to follow a natural growth path reflecting the organisation's needs and the information and advice needs of the government. This path usually begins with the analysis of administrative information and the search for relevant research findings from outside the organisation, and grows in particular areas such as qualitative research. For large entities this has meant the development of specific research, evaluation, statistical and analytic capabilities.
4. Within departments, the research units with the longest life spans are those associated with delivering core social services, particularly public education, public health, social security and the justice system.
5. Other social sector research units within mainstream government departments have often had a more uncertain life, and several have been extinguished as a result of changes in how public sector institutions are organised. Frequently, however, the research **function**, as distinct from the research **entity**, has re-emerged inside another organisation.
6. Excluding universities (which are not covered in this study), successful long-term social research bodies are the New Zealand Council for Education Research (NZCER) and the Health Research Council (HRC). They both focus on a single sector, have clear research priorities, good working relationships with government entities in their sectors and a stable base-funding model. They also seem to have good political antennae, avoiding being seen as at cross-purposes with the policies of the governments of the day.
7. Multi-sector social research bodies – whether research institutions, research grant funds or advisory bodies – with a research contracting function have experienced short life spans in New Zealand. Factors in their demise have included producing information or advice that has not been in line with the priorities or views of the government of the day, an inadequate funding model and, perhaps, the complexity of trying to succeed against odds in a complex multi-sector matrix.



8. Somewhat ironically, given widespread in-principle support for publication, their freedom to choose research topics and publish results makes independent social research bodies more vulnerable to abolition than their government department counterparts.
9. The message from this report is that social research institutions which want to be sustainable over time need to focus their efforts on the type and topic of research that the government and social sector ministries and departments value. This requires a close working relationship with ministries and departments in their field.
10. A whole-of-government multi-sector focus on what works in social interventions has long been an objective in applied social research. It is not clear that the real research requirements of this have been fully understood by New Zealand governments.



Contents

Part 1: The findings	8
1. Overview	9
2. The position of publicly funded social research in New Zealand	11
3. Alternative patterns of research organisation	13
4. For whom the bell tolls	15
5. Why are institutions outside the core government sector more vulnerable?	17
6. Research reviews	20
Part 2: Sector patterns and reviews	21
1. What is social research?	22
2. Overview of patterns of social research development in the public sector	25
3. Social research in individual government departments	28
3.1 Department of Labour	28
3.2 Ministry of Social Development	29
3.3 Oranga Tamariki	32
3.4 Ministry of Justice	32
3.5 Ministry of Education	33
3.6 Ministry of Health	34
3.7 Housing New Zealand Corporation	35
3.8 Accident Compensation Corporation	35
3.9 Te Puni Kōkiri	36
3.10 Ministry for Women	36
3.11 Ministry for Pacific Peoples	37
3.12 The expanding role of Stats NZ	37
4. Single sector research institutions	39
4.1 New Zealand Council for Educational Research	39
4.2 Health Research Council	40
4.3 The Families Commission to 2014	42
5. Multi-sector Research institutions	44
5.1 New Zealand Planning Council	45
5.2 Commission for the Future	45
5.3 Social Sciences Research Fund	46
5.4 New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development	46
5.5 The Families Commission/Superu from 2014	48
5.6 The Social Investment Agency	50



6.	Other social research areas	52
6.1	Marsden Fund Social Science Panel	52
6.2	Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences	52
6.3	Cross Departmental Research Fund	52
6.4	University research institutes	53
7.	Independent economic research	53
8.	Research policy reviews 1981-2010	55
8.1	Social Science Research Fund Committee review	55
8.2	The Couchman Report	55
8.3	The Judge Cartwright Report	57
8.4	Working Party on Operational Social Policy Research	57
8.5	New Avenues for Crown Funded Social Science Research	58
8.6	The Hawke Committee	59
8.7	The O'Loughlin Report	59
8.8	The Hill Report	60
8.9	Social Science Reference Group	60
8.10	Marsden Fund Evaluation	61
8.11	The Scott, Duignan and Faulkner Report	61
9.	Impact of the physical science sector on social research	62
10.	Structural issues in social research organisations	64
11.	Institutional sustainability for social research agencies	67

Appendices

Appendix 1: Bibliography	72
Appendix 2: Annual reports consulted	73
Appendix 3: Websites consulted	74
Appendix 4: List of people consulted	75

List of tables and graphs

Graph 1: Current NZCER funding pattern	42
Table 1: Estimated number of social science positions in government departments, 1972-1982	56
Table 2: Estimate of expenditure on social research undertaken, 1991-1992	58

PART 1

The findings





1 Overview

Success for a social research institution can be defined in several ways, including contribution to fundamental knowledge, effectiveness in positively affecting social policy changes, and developing social research capability. To achieve these objectives over a sustained period, and particularly to develop the use of research evidence in policy, the institutions themselves have to continue to exist and thrive. This report focuses on the existence – or otherwise – of these institutions.

There are distinct groups of social research institutions in New Zealand's public sector with very different histories and likelihoods of a long-term existence.

The **Long Life** group has two partly-linked sub groups. These are:

1. The research, evaluation and information services attached to the major government departments responsible for administering or delivering social services such as health, education, social security and justice.
2. The linked 'single sector' research institutes or research grant funding agencies linked to two of these sectors. These are NZCER (founded in 1933) in the education sector and HRC (founded in 1938 as the Medical Research Council) in the health sector. The latter funds mainly medical research but also funds a number of key social research programmes and projects.

The **Short Life** group consists of two very different categories of institutions:

1. The multi-sector research institutes, research programmes and advisory bodies with research grant or social research contracting functions for applied social research. All of the groups founded before 2017 have been abolished or, in the case of Superu, told they are to be abolished.
2. Research units embedded in government departments which were abolished or absorbed into other ministries. Public sector organisation changes during the period reviewed saw the disappearance of ministries and departments including the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), Ministry of Works, New Zealand Forest Service, Department of Labour and Ministry of Housing.

The outcomes for research units once embedded in these entities are largely unrelated to social research issues as such. Their research unit fates are in a sense collateral damage from decisions taken for other reasons on how state services should be organised. In most cases, however, the research **function**, as distinct from the research **entity**, re-emerged in a different public structure, for example inside the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

Apart from these two identifiable groups, there are a number of other social research activities attached to smaller and more recently formed public sector entities on which judgment about their long term situation is still to be made. Some of these are still limited in their range of research capability, and some (like ACC) have been maturing into units running well-developed research and evaluation programmes. ACC's 43 year life span so far would seem to qualify the ACC research units for membership of the Long Life group.



Success factors for social research institutions

Some of the factors which are present in successful social research bodies are those which are common to all successful professional organisations. These include competent professional staff, good management, and adequate resourcing and critical mass for the size of the task they faced. All Long Life institutions, however, also display four other characteristics:

1. a clearly defined field of research
2. well identified research priorities
3. a stable long term funding model, at least for base line funding
4. effective relations with the departmental policy and social service delivery agencies.

Quite strikingly, the Long Life departmental research units are mainly those embedded in organisations responsible for major services which no New Zealand government has ever sought to abolish. These are public education, public health, social security and justice.

There are also specific factors that apply to some social research bodies but not others. For example, it helps (especially for funding levels) to be in a field such as health which enjoys wide social support and is associated with high status professions such as doctors. Social research in the health field is able to piggy-back on the established prestige of medical research. NZCER was able to survive its pioneer years because it had 10 years of block grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Factors associate with institutional demise

For government departmental social research units which diminished or vanished in the course of public sector restructuring, no common factor other than the restructuring itself has been identified. They were located in 'less core' parts of the public sector. Apart from this, no particular pattern is evident.

For social research and advisory bodies outside of main departments, the factors associated with a short existence are one or more of the following:

1. attempting to cover too many different areas of social research
2. not providing the type of information and advice wanted by the government of the day, or providing information or advice at odds with their policy direction
3. lack of an adequate long term base funding arrangement.

It could perhaps be said that attempting to cover multiple areas of social research in New Zealand conditions is in itself an extremely high risk position, while inadequate funding or not providing what the Government wants are the quickest routes to termination. It is also possible to regard the demise of the Social Science Research Advisory Council as being in part a case of re-organisation of the public sector.

Attempting to cover multiple areas of social research in New Zealand conditions is in itself an extremely high risk position, while inadequate funding or not providing what the Government wants are the quickest routes to termination



This being said, it is also evident that it is very difficult to set up independent social research organisations in New Zealand with adequate resourcing to research long term problems. In the absence of foundation funding, their main source of financial support is the government itself, and social research is seldom a government expenditure priority, especially where long term expenditure commitments are needed.

Before these findings are commented on in detail, it is useful to set these events in a New Zealand historical and institutional context.

2_ The position of publicly funded social research in New Zealand

The New Zealand context

Traditionally, social research has had a low priority in the spending decisions of New Zealand governments and so the aggregate level of 'core' social research has always been low. It has also been low in relation to the traditionally well-funded physical and biological sciences, especially those research areas which support the primary and secondary industries.

For example:

- in the education sector, total budgeted spending for 2017-18 was \$11,608 million. Research funding was \$30.6 million or 0.26 percent of total spending
- at the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), research spending was \$37.49 million or 0.16 percent of the total \$22,986 million budgeted for benefits and social services – and only 0.11 percent if transfers to Superu are excluded
- in the total justice sector (Ministry of Justice including Courts, Department of Corrections and Police), research spending is not differentiated in the estimates from policy spending, and the combined policy and research total of \$21.27 million is still only 0.45 percent of total sector spending
- in the health sector, total research spending including HRC was closer to 0.7 percent of its \$16,733 million budget, though about 60 percent of the HRC expenditure was medical as distinct from social research.

In contrast, semi-commercial AgResearch had \$147.4 million in revenue in 2016, including \$61.9 million in Crown funding.¹

¹ Comparisons with other sectors are notoriously difficult to make and outside the scope of this report. For an order of magnitude comparison, the Ministry of Primary Industry's (MPI) revenue from the Crown in 2016/17 was \$324 million. So crown funding to AgResearch was equivalent to 19% of MPI's crown revenue. This comparison is admittedly crude: some of AgResearch's crown revenue came from other Votes; not all of it was spent directly on research; a substantial proportion of AgResearch's income came from the private sector etc. But it is fairly safe to conclude that expenditure on research in the social sector is very low as a proportion of total spend.

The recent renewed emphasis on matching administrative data sets to learn more about 'high cost' social sector client groups and their needs reflects the realisation that there are huge holes in the social sector knowledge base, and in particular about which interventions work

Low applied social research spending might not matter if the applied social research undertaken does what is needed: enabling the government and its advisers to understand the actual impact of social services on people, and in particular what interventions work (and at what cost) for the disadvantaged individuals and groups in the population. However, this is far from the case. The recent renewed emphasis on matching administrative data sets to learn more about 'high cost' social sector client groups and their needs reflects the realisation that there are huge holes in the social sector knowledge base, and in particular about which interventions work.

The historical pattern of social research development in the public sector

The historical pattern of social research development in government departments and agencies tended to follow this pattern:

1. The collection and analysis of administrative data by people who, for the most part, were not trained professional researchers. Gaps in understanding what the data implied were filled by reference to overseas studies or information from university academics and qualitative studies undertaken by community and special interest groups.
2. From about the 1930s, more professional staff began to be employed in very small numbers, and the independent single sector research groups emerged in the education and health sectors.
3. After the Second World War, the expanded social service role of the welfare state generated a greater need for information. Recruitment of a better educated workforce in government administration was underway, and the first large scale social survey outside the Statistics Department Census was undertaken. This was the Employment Survey by the then Department of Labour, which began in 1946.
4. In large departments, small research sections emerged, initially grouped with a programme, governance or policy unit.
5. Subsequently, the need to assess how well programmes were working led to the development of monitoring and evaluation units or, in large social sector departments, contracting out of evaluation.
6. By the 1970s, the concept of professional social science was being promoted from the science sector departments following a recommendation from the 1969 National Development Conference. Prior to this, social sector research had been largely ignored by the departments responsible for the physical and biological sciences.
7. The expansion of computers and associated increase in data processing capabilities also led to an increased focus on data analysis.

Hence, most of the large departments or agencies involved in the delivery of social service now have:

- a statistical system for analysing the administrative data and records they keep
- some type of research unit or contracted out research programme
- a programme evaluation capacity, either internal or contracted out
- a process for analysing information and feeding it into the policy development process.



While the pattern of development outlined above is evident in all the major continuing social sector departments and agencies, its timing and specific pattern differed with each department, ministry or agency. In 1946, the former Department of Labour led the way in the use of large scale surveys outside those of the then Department of Statistics. ACC started operating in 1974 and quickly began developing its statistical analysis, research and evaluation capacity. On the other hand, some smaller departments and ministries have only embryonic versions of the research capability outlined above.

3 **Alternative patterns of research organisation**

This report has found that, although there are common patterns for developing research and evaluation capability in large social service departments, there are quite specific responses which reflect the particular needs and history of each organisation. Four general types of arrangement are evident and each has a niche to fill:

1. Research and evaluation carried out within the department or agency

Internal research or evaluation units are best placed to meet the internal needs of the organisation and the ongoing and often short notice requests from ministers for policy or programme-related information. They also have the advantage of immediate access to departmental administrative data and records and to front line programme delivery staff.

To do long term research and evaluation effectively within a department or ministry, at least part of the internal research capacity has to be protected from the short term information requirements of the minister and government of the day. This is often difficult. Plus, some topic areas are off limits or information is too politically sensitive to publish.

2. Research and evaluation contracted out to providers on a project-by-project basis

Contracting out allows new demands to be met (providing the funding exists) and can provide specific skills and expertise which the department's own units do not have. In order to manage research contracts effectively, however, the department or agency needs to have professional research assessment capability of its own.

For some of the smaller advisory ministries, contracting out may be the only realistic way to obtain substantive New Zealand-specific research information.



3. Independent but publicly funded research institutions

Independent public sector research institutions, orientated to a particular sector such as NZCER is to education, can focus on medium and long term issues in their sector, provided they have adequate ongoing base line funding. They are well placed to add short and medium term contract research to their long term activities because of the expertise they develop. They need good political antennae to avoid being embroiled in political controversy. In New Zealand, unlike, for example, North America, social sector research institutes are mainly dependent on government funding.

4. Independent or quasi-independent research grant funds set up to cover some of the needs of the sector concerned

Independent or quasi-independent research grant funds can finance researcher-generated proposals which lie outside the specific issues or immediate focus of government departments. However, this can mean that the focus is on research excellence rather than policy relevance, as in the case of the Marsden Fund. Conversely, HRC works closely with the Ministry of Health and MBIE in developing a National Health Research Agenda.

Internal organisation of research and evaluation

Even within large government departments and agencies different patterns of organisation are evident.

1. Single research and evaluation units which undertake all internal research and evaluation for the organisation
2. Specific units attached to major, distinct activities within the organisation
3. A kind of hybrid model where a central unit advises the different activity areas of the organisation on how to set up specific research and evaluation project, which are usually contracted out.
4. 'Co-working' – a newer development – where a range of stakeholders is involved to specify and set up research and evaluation projects. Usually, however, the project has a single institutional owner.

Research across discipline or departmental lines

A frequent comment in a number of research reviews is that research across the lines of different academic disciplines is difficult and works only if there are few parties involved and where the objective of the project is clearly defined. Discussions with a wider range of researchers suggest this view needs to be nuanced:

1. Joint projects between departments can work well, although the need for a clearly defined objective holds good. It also helps if the project reflects a clear Cabinet directive or an agreement between the chief executives concerned.
2. Also workable is parallel research into different aspects of the same broader problem, with each entity covering specified areas.
3. Academics from different disciplines can work together if a shared interest is identified. Having research funding attached helps.

Research across the lines of different academic disciplines is difficult and only works if there are few parties involved and where the objective of the project is clearly defined



4. Co-working is identified by several sources as an important feature in the design of recent evaluation and research projects.
5. The central provision of statistical information which can be used by a variety of different researchers is also cited as being important. This includes Stats NZ's development of the Integrated Data Infrastructure.
6. The disaster area for New Zealand applied social research has been when one agency attempts to do or commission core social policy research across a wide range of areas.

4 For whom the bell tolls

In the period under review, New Zealand governments have established two advisory committees with multi-sector research functions, two multi-sector social research institutes and one multi-sector social research fund. Four have already been abolished and the fifth (Superu) is being abolished in 2018. More details are given in the background papers in section 2, and here is a brief summary.

1. The **New Zealand Planning Council** (1977-1991) was set up as an advisory body to Government in an era when economic planning was in vogue. It commissioned research projects across a wide range of sectors and produced policy reports. By 1991, its long term planning focus was unwelcome to the government of the day and it was abolished.
2. The **Commission for the Future** (1977-82) was the second of the advisory bodies with a multi-sector focus. While always constricted by limited resourcing, it did produce reports on topics as widely diverse as nuclear war and public attitudes to living standards. It was abolished in 1982 and its functions transferred to the Planning Council.
3. The **Social Sciences Research Fund Committee** (1979-1990) was part of the then Department of Social Welfare. It was always small, its 1986-87 grant level being only \$175,000. The Judge Cartwright Independent Review had proposed that it be transformed into an independent social science research council governed by a widely representative board with a \$3.35 million budget. Instead, it was abolished in 1990 and its functions transferred to the new Foundation for Research Science and Technology, with high level priorities being set by the new Ministry of Research Science and Technology.

One casualty of the abolition of the committee was the initiative to set up a social science research information network. This re-emerged 25 years later as 'The Hub' under Superu.

4. The **New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development** (1992-95) was set up as a commercial Crown Research Institute² to provide research capacity across a range of different social sector areas. It lacked ongoing grant funding and was supposed to operate at a profit by securing research contracts. It was wound up when it became clear that it was running at a large loss and could not meet its financial targets.
5. The **Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu)** was set up in 2014 as a major change to the family research function of the Families Commission.³

The Families Commission Amendment Act 2014 required Superu to “monitor and evaluate programmes and interventions in the social sector, and to provide social science research into key issues, programmes and interventions across that sector”.

For this massive increase in responsibilities, relatively modest additional resources were added to its budget. Superu responded by launching a series of cross sector research infrastructure initiatives including the development of The Hub (an online repository of government social science research) and a publication protocol. The volume of family-focused research it carried out, however, dropped. Further, Superu did not provide the type of policy-ready programme evaluation that the government wanted. In 2017, Superu was told that it would be abolished and some of its resources transferred to MSD, the Ministry of Justice and the new Social Investment Agency.
6. The new entity in the multi-sector area is the **Social Investment Agency**, set up in 2017. Its focus is on using departmental administrative data to identify the whole-of-government relationships between government programmes and their clients, in particular those related to high cost individuals and households.

Marsden Fund Social Science Panel (1994-current)

Outside this framework is the multi-sector Marsden Fund. It has a number of research panels including the Social Science Panel which covers 21 different sub-sectors of social related research. The panel has a current budget of \$11.07 million.

Research grants from this panel, as with all Marsden Fund panels, are based on the excellence of the research proposal rather than any relevance to the social policy issues of the day. Accordingly, Marsden Fund research activities lie well outside the focus of this report.

Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences (BRCSS) (2004-10)

Also outside this framework is BRCSS, funded by the Tertiary Education Commission and designed to develop social researcher skills rather than undertake applied social research. Its funding was terminated in 2010. A small social researcher network assisted by administrative support from some universities continues from this programme.

² Crown Research Institutes are science research businesses owned by the Crown in New Zealand.

³ The Families Commission was established in 2004.



Cross Departmental Research Fund (CDRF) (1997-2009)

A second fund outside this framework is CDRF, founded in 1997 as the Departmental Contestable Research Pool. It was open to all types of departmental research projects, not just social research, with approval by the Minister of Science on the basis of recommendations by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology. It funded a number of small social research projects and was abolished in the 2009 budget round.

5_ Why are institutions outside the core government sector more vulnerable?

Certain parts of the publicly funded social research sector can survive giving free and frank advice to the government, even if the government does not wish to receive it. Conversely, this is a high risk activity for non-core advisory bodies. Why the difference?

A large part relates to the need for modern governments to keep delivering certain types of social services which the populace is committed to. Accordingly, it becomes essential to the government to receive information and advice about the management of these services. For example, no modern New Zealand government has ever sought to abolish the justice, public education, public health or social security systems.

Core departments and ministries can survive telling the government uncomfortable things it may not wish to hear

However, Governments have frequently abolished advisory groups, and even once-major departments like the DSIR and the Ministry of Works, which are less core in terms of delivery of services to the population. It is no coincidence that the longest lasting social research functions are precisely those associated with the core social service functions of modern governments. It seems that core departments and ministries can survive telling the government uncomfortable things it may not wish to hear.

The independent but publicly funded research and advisory institutions covered in this report lie well outside core government, and are highly vulnerable to abolition if they fail to provide the type of information or advice the government of the day wants, or if they provide information the government does not want. Unlike their North American counterparts, these institutions do not have independent sources of income from private sector foundations. The consequent reliance on government funding creates something of a tension between independence and long term viability. The single sector entities of NZCER and HRC seem to have succeeded in maintaining the balance over the longer term.



Social research has always been a low priority for New Zealand governments, which have never been prepared to fund social research organisations to the level allocated to the physical and biological sciences

Why is multi-sector research so hard in New Zealand?

For an individual research entity in New Zealand, the attempt to cover research for a wide range of different social sectors on core social policy issues is usually a recipe for being perceived as a failure by Government and being wound up. There are several reasons for this.

1. The wide range of professional skills and knowledge required to cover different sectors cannot be found within one small research agency or one small research contract programme. Researchers risk becoming Jacks and Jills of all trades, masters and mistresses of none. If this occurs, the quality of research produced may not match that of the dedicated single sector researchers.
2. In part, this conundrum reflects the fact that social research has always been a low priority for New Zealand governments, which have never been prepared to fund social research organisations to the level allocated to the physical and biological sciences. The result is that there has never been any possibility of a successful multi-sector research body along the lines of well-funded North American or European research institutes. Such organisations have the money to hire top researchers in a range of fields or contract out the work to specialist researchers elsewhere. New Zealand organisations have never had the level of funding needed to make this possible.

As an example, the highly respected Brookings Institute in Washington DC covers a wide range of research fields and is one of a plethora of think tanks in the US. Brookings' 2016 budget was US\$108.497 million (NZ\$159 million). In contrast, Superu spent \$12.7 million in 2016-17 – roughly 8 per cent of Brookings' budget.

3. It takes a long time for a new institution to build research capability and credibility. This is somewhat easier, although still difficult, in a single sector field. Even the Brookings Institute (founded in 1916) started out as an institution for governance research and policy, and only branched out into other fields as it developed credibility and attracted more funding.
4. With multiple research fields to cover and limited resources (the classic New Zealand pattern) it becomes difficult to identify the real research priorities for the organisation and public sector.⁴ Hence, many of the public bodies (and their ministers) expecting useful policy-related research to emerge in their field become dissatisfied with multi-sector organisations.
5. A research organisation which seeks to provide uninvited evaluations of the activities of a range of other organisations risks antagonising them.
6. The lack of strong links to core government agencies makes multi-sector research bodies vulnerable to cutbacks in periods of constrained government funding.

⁴ For a recent attempt at this, see <http://superu.govt.nz/directions>



Why are single sector research organisations more likely to endure?

Single sector research organisations in New Zealand have tended to be more enduring than their multi-sector counterparts. The focus should perhaps be on the word 'more' because outside government only two such organisations have lasted: NZCER and HRC.

One of their advantages is a more manageable scope of work, an important factor in the context of small budgets. Perhaps more important, however, is their demonstrated ability to better align research priorities with what the government and its ministries want. This is a great deal easier if there is only one key ministry or department to work with. In this sense, the internal research functions of social service organisations have a head start.

A clear distinction needs to be made between professional independence and priority setting. The former should always be present. For the latter, however, the government is the client and paymaster so the issues which need to be addressed are decided by the government and its ministries.

Could a multi-sector research organisation succeed in New Zealand?

The short life expectancy of organisations discussed in this report raises the issue of whether they have any realistic chance of succeeding in the local intellectual, political and administrative environment. Conversely, examples exist abroad of multi-sector research organisations that do succeed.⁵

The key applied social research need of New Zealand governments seems to be effective programme design and evaluation, for example, knowing what works in social policy interventions. While most of what works knowledge is sector specific, there are advantages in also taking a whole-of-government approach. This is particularly so where there are grounds for concluding that early interventions in severe social problems produce better life outcome for individuals and lower long-term costs for the government.

For such an organisation to have a reasonable chance of succeeding it would seem to need:

- adequate resourcing
- the right mix of professional skills, including large scale data use, research synthesis abilities and sector-specific knowledge
- effective working relationships with the ministries and departments charged with delivering social services
- an effective way of aligning project choice with government and departmental priorities
- sufficient administrative clout to be effective.

In this last respect it would be desirable to associate such an agency with one or more of the multi-sector policy ministries (Treasury, State Service Commission or the Office of Prime Minister and Cabinet) and to ensure that they report directly to a senior Cabinet minister.

⁵ For example, the aforementioned Brookings Institute, The Washington State Institute for Public Policy, The Campbell Collaboration, Dartington Service Design Lab.

6 Research reviews

Over the thirty year period from 1981 to 2010 there were a series of social research reviews. Summaries are provided in part 2 of this report. Common themes emerge, in particular:

- the diversity of the wider social research sector
- the low research funding levels provided to the social sector by government.

Some (but not all) of the reviews went on to make specific recommendations on funding levels and the type of organisation which should be set up to cover social research needs. Others looked at different issues, including improving connections within the sector, improving research efficiency, or distinguishing operational and longer term research.

Most of the recommendations from the reviews were not accepted by government and most key decisions regarding social research seem to have been made for other reasons.



PART 2

Sector patterns and reviews





1 What is social research?

Social research or what social scientists and other social research workers do is a difficult thing to define. The Cartwright Committee in 1987 defined social science as 'people research'. Dr Roberta Hill in her Social Science report to the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology a decade later stated that "the subject of the social sciences is people, especially in their interaction with each other and their environment". Social research (or social science research if the term is preferred) essentially deals with:

"human behaviour, the outcome for individuals and groups in the context of the environment in which they live, and the impact of interventions on what occurs".

However, this is a wide definition which covers both theoretical and applied social research in many fields. The definition is too wide to be useful for public policy purposes. It could, for example, include the reason for consumer preferences in the patterns on clothing fabric or the marriage customs of the Inuit in Greenland. Neither of these have any relevance to the New Zealand public policy environment, though the first may be useful for market researchers in the private sector.

For the purpose of this report a narrower focus is taken. This is:

"applied social research relating to the activities of public sector social services, their client groups, and the impact of their interventions on life outcomes for individual and families".

Even this definition raises problems of how widely the boundaries of public social research are to be drawn. For example, is all data on the population collected by Stats NZ to be counted as social research or should the term apply only when this data is analysed for policy purposes? Similarly, how much of the use of departmental administrative data should be considered social research? There is no single correct answer to these questions.

For the purpose of this study the use of the term 'social research' focuses on applied social research and, more specifically, that part of applied social research which is orientated towards finding solutions for the issues and problems faced by public sector social services. This is social research which usually involves the analysis of data, including administrative data, and also the findings of field research for policy formulation purposes. Further, quantitative parts of the research usually involve the activities of formally trained researchers, often in or for social research organisations or research units within departments set up for the purpose.

Finally, the main focus in this study is on what is classified as 'core' social research. It relates to applied research to supply evidence to assist policy development in public sector social service delivery agencies.

The term 'social research' focuses on that part of applied social research which is orientated towards finding solutions for the issues and problems faced by public sector social services



What is a social research organisation?

For the purpose of this report a social research organisation is an entity or part of an entity incorporated in another organisation which either:

1. engages directly in social research with its in-house staff
2. has as a primary or major function the commissioning of outside researchers to carry out specified social research projects, or provides grants towards such agreed projects.

These two types could be referred respectively as to as **social research institutions** and **social research commissioning agencies**.

In addition, a social research organisation may also involve itself in any or all of the following activities:

1. identify priorities for social research
2. assist in building research capacity elsewhere
3. encourage the formation of information sharing networks among researchers in related fields
4. publicise and disseminate the results of research findings
5. provide direct input to government social policy formation.

Some of these secondary research-related functions can be carried out by non-research organisations. Further, not all necessarily fit within the same research organisation. For example, a research organisation which is involved primarily in allocating funds to competing researchers may not be well placed to build trusting information sharing networks among these researchers.

Who undertakes public social research?

Social policy researchers do not come from one identifiable academic discipline or background. In fact, they may have academic training in economics, sociology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, criminology, demography, applied mathematics or statistics

Social policy researchers do not come from one identifiable academic discipline or background. In fact, they may have academic training in economics, sociology, social psychology, cultural anthropology, criminology, demography, applied mathematics or statistics. Some may come from other academic disciplines entirely, including medicine, law, geography, history, Māori studies or accounting.

The lack of a common and distinct social science background is a characteristic of the broad social research industry in New Zealand. In this respect, social science research is sharply different from research in areas such as physics or chemistry. It is more unified around what is sought to be done rather than a common intellectual framework. Even the term 'social science' is a little misleading because individual human behaviour does not operate with the same degree of predictability as a chemical reaction. Having said that, human behaviour in the aggregate does have some degree of predictability and measuring this is part of social research.

Which public sector agencies generate social research?

The biggest generators of core or applied social research in New Zealand in the period since World War II have been the large government organisations delivering social services, and the related research organisations they fund or which are funded for related purposes. These government organisations include those which now comprise the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Development and Justice. At one stage, the former Department of Labour was also a major contributor. Others include the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), Te Puni Kōkiri, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Housing New Zealand, the Ministry for Pacific Peoples and the Ministry for Women. Social research has also been generated or commissioned at times by Treasury, the State Service Commission and the former New Zealand Forest Service. Stats NZ has been an important generator of research data for other organisations to analyse.

More recent additions to the list of public sector research providers have been the Families Commission/Superu and the Social Investment Agency.

Publicly funded universities generate a significant volume of social research; though only some of this is directly orientated to the social policy issues of the day, and hence lies mainly outside the applied social research focus of this report and is not covered here.

Social research is also carried out by a variety of small groups and individuals and the numerous non-government organisations (NGOs) in New Zealand. This is not usually government funded, though from time to time some groups (for example, the Society for Research on Women) have received research grants.

Some private research companies also contract social research for government departments. The longest established are those in the economic research field, but other groups have developed more recently.

Who uses social research?

The major users of core social research are government departments, more particularly those delivering social services, or those like Treasury, Te Puni Kōkiri and the Ministry for Women, which are required to advise the government on policy issues or the likely impacts of proposed policy changes. As the Hawke Committee noted in 1995 “Government...is the principal beneficiary of applied social research”.

A second set of users of social research includes the voluntary sector and not-for-profit organisations involved in social service delivery to clients or advocacy services for them. While some also undertake moderate amounts of research, they are also heavy users of research and information generated elsewhere. Most of these organisations are seeking funds for their own research rather than being potential funders of the social service research desired by the government.

The major users of core social research are government departments, more particularly those delivering social services



A third rather small group includes private sector firms which use some social research of an essentially economic nature. Much of this is catered for by contracted research from the New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER), Business and Economic Research Ltd (BERL), Infometrics and MOTU Research. This definition of course excludes the huge volume of market research used by commercial enterprises which would be included in any broad definition of social research, but is not regarded as core research for the purposes of this study.

2_ Overview of patterns of social research development in the public sector

This report has indicated that the long term development of social research in the New Zealand public sector follows a number of patterns.

1. An early focus on the collection and analysis of administrative data, usually involving people who were not trained social sector researchers. Other New Zealand social research related to the public sector mainly involved academics and voluntary sector research groups without taxpayer funding for their research activities.
2. The development of the first sector-specific social research institutions in the education and health sectors in the 1930s.
3. The gradual growth of professional research capacity inside the main public sector departments especially after World War II, later followed by the setting up of some professional research firms in the economic research field.
4. A wave of focus on professional social research as a social science, driven in part from input from research organisations based in the physical and biological sciences.
5. A period of flux after 1984 when major changes in the organisation of the public sector occurred and a number of social research organisations or social research-linked arrangements experienced short lives. While some departmental research units shrank or ceased to exist, others grew.
6. The development of more research contracting firms outside the traditional university faculty framework.
7. More particularly in the past decade, a renewed focus on analysing administrative data, using the advances in information technology to cross-tabulate data from a range of different sources and analyse the whole-of-government impact of particular policies.



Social research up to the 1930s

Before the first statutory social research organisations emerged in New Zealand in the 1930s a certain amount of social research already took place. This had three main forms:

1. The collection and analysis of departmental statistics

Collection of population and administrative data goes well back into the 19th century. For example, long term tables in the New Zealand Official Yearbook record annual population estimates going back to 1880. The collection of administrative data, including some on aspects of social services, also began early as the governments of the day needed information for budgeting and management purposes. Substantial data available in successive yearbooks covers areas such as hospital boards, orphanages, mental hospitals (sic) and pensions, and later special works schemes and emergency relief, and scholarships. Later again comes the data covering the 1938 Social Security Act and its coverage of social security benefits, pensions and health spending.

Some of this data is analysed in ways which can only be described as constituting social research. For example, the 1941 Yearbook (p135) records that of 1,247 children in orphanages, more than half (723) had both parents alive, and in only 21 cases were both parents dead. In effect, the main role of orphanages was to cater for what would now be called unsupported children.

2. Work by voluntary organisations and societies

Voluntary organisations and societies were a recurrent feature of 19th century and early 20th century society, as they still are today, though much of the early pattern is poorly documented in official sources. In the health field, for example, the 1947-49 Yearbook entry (p113) includes the then Medical Research Council as cooperating in research carried out by the Travis Trust laboratory for tuberculosis research and the New Zealand branch of the British Empire Cancer campaign society.

3. Individual academic researchers, usually as an adjunct to their teaching role

This was individual research mainly by university academics. Again, much is poorly recorded, though exceptions occur in economics and in the journals of the Polynesian Society.

Apart from these domestic sources of research information, policy makers would have also drawn heavily on the findings of overseas research.

The education and health sectors

In the 1930s, two sector-specific social research organisations were set up: the New Zealand Council for Education Research (NZCER) in 1933 and the Medical Research Council (later Health Research Council, HRC) in 1938. NZCER was a research institution, while HRC was a research commissioning organisation. HRC was taxpayer funded from the beginning, but NZCER was funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York for its first 10 years before receiving a base line level of taxpayer funding.

Both organisations geared their research towards their sectors and developed close relationships with the relevant public sector departments and agencies.



Growth of departmental research capacity after World War II

A significant part of the development of social research capacity after World War II consisted of expanding capacity to undertake research and programme evaluations inside government departments. This research growth initially took place under the radar in terms of public consciousness. In part this growth reflected the increased role of the state in the economy in this period and including the growth of the welfare state.

In the Yearbooks for the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s the terms 'social research' and 'social science' do not occur in the indexes and the casual reader might wrongly assume that outside of educational and health, no official social research took place in New Zealand. Only in the 1968 Yearbook (p243) is there a short reference:

"In the social sciences a number of government departments undertake some research activities for their own requirements, including Department of Education, Department of Justice, Department of Labour, Department of Statistics."

By the 1972 Yearbook (p232) the newly formed Department of Social Welfare is added to the list, and a research expenditure classification on page 234 indicates that \$706,000 or 2 percent of national research expenditure was for social services.

Finally, in the 1985 Yearbook (p260) there is an attempt to provide a wider perspective on social research. The text notes:

"There are five reasonably distinct organisational contexts in which social scientific research is carried out in New Zealand;

- a). Universities*
- b). Research units in government departments and some local government authorities*
- c). Independent social research units which receive some government funds*
- d). Commercial market research firms, private research consultancies, and research or analysis units within private enterprises*
- e). Voluntary agencies such as the Society for Research on Women."*

By the 1986-87 Yearbook (p401) a fuller attempt to measure government expenditure on social science is made which recognises the widening range of sponsoring departments.

"Government expenditure on social science research is funded through the Departments of Justice, Social Welfare, Education, Forest Service, Internal Affairs, Lands and Survey and DSIR, amounting to \$5,163,000 for the year ended March 1985."

The wider recognition of what was happening in public sector social research lagged many years behind what was actually happening.



3_ Social research in individual government departments

After World War II a generalised expansion in government activity took place in the context of booming economic times and significant population growth. A feature of this expansion was the growth of social research capacity in some government departments. However, the individual trajectories were different and some of the early leaders in this growth subsequently declined in the wake of major state sector organisational changes after 1984.

The individual departmental patterns follow:

3.1_ Department of Labour

The former Department of Labour was the earliest of the administrative departments to develop a major research programme after World War II

The former Department of Labour (DOL) was the earliest of the administrative departments to develop a major research programme after World War II. The times were propitious for it. This was the era of full employment, labour shortages, an activist public sector in a range of activities from factory inspection and workers compensation to sponsored migration, and a national industrial bargaining framework overseen by the Arbitration Court. DOL was then one of the major New Zealand departments. Government involvement in this wide field of activity required an enhanced information base. DOL responded accordingly.

John Martin's study (p264) notes that from 1946 the department undertook a half yearly employment survey. The text goes on to add:

"The Department's Research Division under Woods began to publish report on topics such as labour turnover and worker participation in industry."

and

"The Division made an important contribution to demographic analysis relating to issues such as immigration, manpower planning, and the employment of Māori."

In the 1970s DOL had the largest number of staff classified as researchers in the administrative departments outside of the physical and biological sciences. The Couchman report (p9) assessed DOL as having 56 research positions in 1972. The pre-eminence of DOL lasted until the Labour Force Survey was transferred to the then Department of Statistics, after which DOL's research role declined. However, even at 56 research staff it was the largest of a school of minnows compare to the whales of the physical and biological scientists employed by the Department of Scientific and Industrial research (DSIR) and agriculture.



The reducing scope of DOL

The further decline of the role of DOL and with it the associated research activity came as others of its functions shifted elsewhere or were diminished in scope. These included:

- the Accident Compensation Act of 1972, which transferred Work Accident responsibility to ACC in 1974
- the effective abolition of national collective bargaining in the Employment Contracts Act of 1991
- The transfer of Employment Service to a combined Work and Income Department held within the then Social Welfare portfolio in 1998.

By 2012 the much diminished DOL had been merged into MBIE.

Labour research within the MBIE structure

Within the MBIE structure, research and evaluation related to labour issues are organised across several teams. These include 11 full time equivalent staff (FTE) working on labour and migration research and evaluation activities. A further 4-5 FTE are in the strategic policy area. Not counted in these figures are around 16 people in data and analysis (monitoring, forecasting, modelling) teams. From time to time resources are boosted for particular projects by employing a short term contract worker.

A major focus of MBIE labour analytics is on monitoring, forecasting and evaluation. A key objective is to provide evidence and insight to support strategy and policy development. The research and evaluation teams work in a series of different ways according to the needs of client groups inside MBIE. This may range from simply providing advice, to designing evaluation frameworks, managing evaluation contracts, or undertaking the whole project. A big emphasis is on co-working with contractors and internal clients to obtain a better evaluation product. This involves the Research and Evaluation Manager in a great deal of relationship work.

MBIE places more focus on monitoring than on primary research in the labour portfolio areas, but makes substantial use of administrative data bases. A longitudinal data set has been developed in the immigration area. There has been significant interaction with the Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) project. MBIE also works closely with the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC, Treasury and the State Services Commission on identifying key labour market trends and shaping debate on labour market issues.

3.2 _ Ministry of Social Development

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) is the current name and embodiment of the organisation previously known as the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), and for a shorter period as the Ministry of Social Policy.

DSW was formed in 1972. It was a merger of the Social Security Department, set up to administer the new benefits and pensions flowing from the Social Security Act of 1938, and the Child Welfare Division of the Department of Education set up in 1924. In turn, the Social Security Department had itself absorbed the Pensions Department set up in the wake of the 1898 Old Age Pensions Act (Preston p10). Hence DSW was an entity which had grown both as a result of the expansion of state activity and because of changes in the way the public sector was organised. It was to gain greater responsibility in 1998 when it absorbed the Employment Service from DOL. The Employment Service was merged with the Income Support Service of DSW to form the DSW Department of Work and Income. DSW also gained responsibility for administering tertiary student allowances.

Expansion of DSW research capacity

Initially, the research capacity of DSW was small, with 13 research workers. For the first few years, research capacity remained small, annual staff numbers fluctuating between 11 and 13, and remained divided into social security and child welfare sections.

By the 1980s, however, a major expansion in the research capacity of DSW was under way as it had to cope with growing beneficiary numbers and also with growing numbers of children in its care. DSW obtained more research and policy resources as a consequence. The 1981 annual report noted (p14) the location of a Joint Committee on Young Offenders in DSW and of a secretariat of the Social Science Research Fund. The 1982 annual report (p11) noted the establishment of a Social Programme Evaluation Unit. Further developments continued, and by the late 1980s DSW had a well-developed research and policy structure including separate policy, research, and evaluation and statistical monitoring units.

The era of devolution

In the 1990s a new chief executive devolved DSW into several autonomous business units, and this led to the establishment of the Social Policy Agency (SPA) (1992-1999). The others were the Income Support Service, Community Funding Agency, and the Children and Young Persons Service.

SPA was not an independent public sector entity but an autonomous business unit responsible for ongoing policy, research, statistical monitoring and evaluation work in the areas covered by DSW, and also operated a highly regarded financial forecasting unit. It set up the Social Policy Journal of New Zealand, which provided a way of disseminating policy and research findings related to the wider social services sector. In 1998 it absorbed the housing policy function of the Ministry of Housing, though this location was to be temporary.

By 1999, however, the subsequent chief executive of DSW favoured a move back to departmental centralisation, and SPA and the DSW corporate office were merged back into the new Ministry of Social Policy (MSP). In 2001, a further merger took place. The Department of Work and Income and MSP were merged back into the renamed Ministry of Social Development. In the interim, the separate Community Funding Agency had been abolished, while the renamed Department of Child Youth and Family remained within the MSD framework until 2017.





The Social Policy Journal of New Zealand

The Journal was set up in 1993 by the SPA and survived after SPA's demise. It continued as an MSP/MSD sponsored publication until 2010 and received a wide range of contributions from the broader social services sector.

No official reason was ever given for the closure of the Journal. However, informal sources commented that an article about to be published included information which indicated that a statement made by a Minister was inaccurate. Publication of the issue was delayed until public interest in the topic died down and it was decided to cease publication of the Journal, apparently to avoid future difficulties with Ministers.

The development indicates the difficulties of maintaining the ability to publish research findings within a politically sensitive environment in a government department.

Additional research resourcing

For what is now MSD the 1990s had been a period of financial austerity. In the first decade of the 21st century more resources were allocated to MSD. This period saw the establishment within MSD of the Centre for Social Research and Evaluation. Significant new research activities included the development of the Social Report and of the Surveys of Living Standards of New Zealanders.

Initial work also began on the concept of social investment. MSD's 2003/04 annual report (p20) noted "while social protection tackles the symptoms of disadvantage, social investment tackles the causes". This work lost momentum after the departure of Minister Steve Maharey and did not gain real impetus again until Finance Minister and later Prime Minister Bill English became a supporter of the approach.

Changing responsibilities

As mentioned, peak resourcing levels for MSD research were in the first decade of the 21st century. MSD subsequently lost some resources to fund the Families Commission in 2004, which meant the effective end of its Centre for Social Research and Evaluation.

In 2017 Child Youth and Family Service was separated out to form the Ministry for Vulnerable Children Oranga Tamariki and this meant about 20 research and related staff moved to the new Ministry. Offsetting this was the abolition of the Families Commission/Superu, and some resources flowed back to MSD, which took over responsibility for managing the contract with the University of Auckland for the Growing Up in New Zealand longitudinal study, the funding and responsibility for the Children and Families Research Fund and the Ministerial Social Sector Research Fund, all previously managed by Superu.

Even after the establishment of Oranga Tamariki, MSD still administers the largest expenditure programmes of any ministry. This includes the key social security and employment service functions. It also administers tertiary study assistance and social housing allocation policies. These areas will always need a large research and information service.

Even after the establishment of Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry of Social Development still administers the largest expenditure programmes of any ministry. It will always need a large research and information service



Current research and related staffing in MSD is understood to include 26 FTE in research and evaluation proper, 23 in reporting, 45 in data management and information, and 17 in client and business intelligence. Direct funding for outside research contracting is limited. However, the MSD research and evaluation area does advise other parts of the business on evaluation when programmes or activities in these areas need review. If a decision is made to use outside evaluators, additional funding, usually from that business area, is sought.

As of March 2018, current research priorities focus on evidence-based policy and the social return on investment. MSD research and evaluation staff seek to work cooperatively with other ministries and agencies where responsibilities intersect.

3.3 _ Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki or the Ministry for Vulnerable Children (now Ministry for Children) was set up in 2017 as a ministry separate from MSD, its former parent organisation. This ended the 1972 merger of child welfare and social security in one organisation.

Oranga Tamariki includes a research and evaluation team, largely drawn from former MSD researchers.

The new research and evaluation team, known as the Oranga Tamariki Evidence Team, has around 30 staff. Its focus is on data analytics, research synthesis, modelling and evaluation. The team aims to building an evidence base and become an authoritative voice on child wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children.

3.4 _ Ministry of Justice

The former Department of Justice (it became a Ministry in 1995) went through changes in research development similar to other mainstream administrative departments, though on a different timing with heavy reliance on administrative statistics remaining important internally for longer. It also relied on external input from the Institute of Criminology and, later, the Law Commission.

As late as the 1975 annual report (p17) it noted:

“the most important event of 1974 has been the commencement of a complete review of the Justice statistics relating to criminal cases and their disposition”.

On the same page, however, Justice also noted “A statistical study of the socio-demographic correlates of divorce has reached the final stage”, indicating that research was taking place before 1974. By the 1976 report topics included a report on a census of persons in prison or on probation. By the 1978 report (p8) Justice reported “The Planning and Development Division has now become a reality” and “The research section has now become a unit of the Division”. The report also mentions that “the Department continues to liaise closely with the Institute of Criminology”.



By 1980 Justice was described (p9) as engaging in “research into criminological, sociological, and other issues relevant to the departmental actions”. Subsequently the 1982 report (p9) stated “during the year it became obvious that changes in the evaluation process undertaken by the department are essential if constructive review of policy is to be achieved”.

By the 1985 report (p11) Justice was feeling the pressure of “a very extensive law reform programme, the completion of which will stretch to the limit the resources of a small division” shortly after the Law Commission Act 1985 provided an additional external resource.

Subsequent developments have involved something of a division of labour between the renamed Ministry of Justice (MOJ) and the Law Commission, with the latter concentrating mainly on legal issues. MOJ has undertaken most of the research and this has involved a major growth in its internal research activity. Its core is the Evidence and Evaluation Group of 17 members, with a heavy emphasis on the evaluation of policies, best practice reviews and supporting strategic and investment decisions, rather than pure research. Some research, evaluation and statistical projects are contracted out.

3.5 _ Ministry of Education

Like many other government departments around the world, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has not relied solely on its own research and evaluation work for informing policy design and operation. It also builds on work by the academic sector in New Zealand, and where appropriate, overseas. Contracting out of research studies to NZCER and to university and other researchers has always played a large role in MOE’s research policy, in contrast with MSD, for example, which has relied more on internally-based researchers.

As in most government departments, research in the then Department of Education began with the analysis of administrative data. Other research used for policy development was mostly that which occurred overseas or was locally researched outside the departmental structure.

More focus on internal research began with the arrival of Dr Clarence Beeby (from NZCER) as Director General of Education in 1940 and proceeded on lines similar to that seen in other major social sector departments.

The 1975 annual report (p36) noted, in relation to the Research and Planning Unit:

“In 1974 a thorough internal review of the unit was carried out to prepare for increased research activity. Subsequent increases in staff have strengthened the unit’s capacity, particularly to conduct evaluation studies and undertake surveys.”

The same report also noted (p37) that more funding was given to NZCER “for additional staff to be appointed to support research into early childhood and education”. The 1976 report notes (p36) that NZCER was granted funding for a sociolinguistic survey of Māori households.

Research in the then Department of Education began with the analysis of administrative data. Other research used for policy development was mostly that which occurred overseas or was locally researched outside the departmental structure



The 1978 report (p38) notes that a new research programme was established “to bring together items of research previously located in other programmes”.

The 1981 annual report (p260) refers to “major research studies under research contracts with universities and teacher colleges”. The 1983 report (p29) lists 59 research projects.

Thus, by the 1980s, what is now the Ministry of Education had moved from simple data analysis to a broad functional research capacity including survey research and programme evaluation.

The current organisation format in the Ministry is to operate research and evaluation within two streams.

1. An Analysis, Research and Evaluation (ARE) group that focuses on evaluation in the education sector up to secondary school. This has a staffing of around 30 people and sits in a broader Evidence, Data and Knowledge Division. ARE uses a range of data upon which to base its research, evaluation and analytical work ranging from administrative data to surveys and large scale national and international studies (for example, the National Monitoring Study of Student Achievement and the Programme for International Student assessment (PISA)).
2. A tertiary sector performance analysis team which sits in the Graduate Achievement and Vocational Careers Division. This includes a policy and analysis function, focusing mainly on tertiary sector and post-school education issues.

There is still a significant use of administrative data although the changes produced by Tomorrows Schools means that less of this is centrally held than in the past. External contracting of specialised and long term research also continues.

3.6 _ Ministry of Health

The Ministry of Health (MOH) has traditionally outsourced most of its social research and evaluation work. Projects are generated by individual divisions on a decentralised basis, and there is no central research. The current value of research and evaluation contracts is about \$25 million, though some of these spread over several years.

The dominant role in health research is that of the separate HRC with which MOH works closely in the context of a National Health Research Strategy. However, three of the 11 teams at MOH have a research or evaluation component. The largest regular research survey undertaken by MOH is the New Zealand Health Survey undertaken by its technology and digital services team. This is a continuous survey with annual results for publication. The field work is contracted out.

As of early 2018, MOH is reviewing its internal research and evaluation capacity. Issues include the prioritisation of research and evaluation projects, and the lack of focused internal research expertise because of the high degree of reliance on external contractors.



3.7 _ Housing New Zealand Corporation

Housing policy and research has had a somewhat mobile history, with functions moving from the former Housing Corporation to the now defunct Ministry of Housing, the Department of Building and Housing (now in MBIE) and, for a period, to MSD.

As of early 2018, Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) does not have a housing policy advice role, but works with other policy units in the housing and social policy sectors and actively contributes to the development of policy and initiatives.

HNZC undertakes limited evaluation and research, predominantly commissioned by business units to meet operational needs. Organisationally, the Evaluation and Research Unit with three FTE sits within the Governance unit. The current programme of work employs programme evaluation and the use of administrative data for operationally focused projects. HNZC partners with other agencies to undertake and/or co-design evaluation with a view to building an evidence base to inform decision making. Recently Stats NZ's Social Investment Analytical Layer (SIAL) first test case was developed using HNZC data.

The quarterly customer satisfaction survey is done by a contracted provider.

3.8 _ Accident Compensation Corporation

The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) was founded as the Accident Compensation Commission in 1974 following the Accident Compensation Act 1972. This extended accident insurance cover (on a no faults basis) from the previous Workers Compensation scheme covering work injuries to the whole population, that is both earners and non-earners. It also covers motor vehicle accidents and injuries from treatment known prior to 2005 as medical misadventures. The present scheme, as amended several times, is primarily levy funded and covers compensation (including lost earnings) for work injuries, non-work accidents, motor vehicle accidents, and medical and rehabilitation treatment.

The need for good statistics to cover its case management meant that ACC was an early developer of the use and management of administrative statistics on clients. This in turn led to the development of research and evaluation processes and more sophisticated data analytics.

As at early 2018, ACC has about 100 people involved in various forms of research, evaluation and analytics. These are grouped into around 10 teams covering special areas such as clinical services and actuarial services. The total includes a central research team founded in 2008 which has 11 members. This team assists other groups with research or evaluation projects, acting as research advisors rather than researchers. Total research activity including contracted out work is assessed as being around \$10 million annually, though the figure depends to a degree on how some activities are classified.

The need for good statistics to cover its case management meant that ACC was an early developer of the use and management of administrative statistics on clients. This in turn led to the development of research and evaluation processes and more sophisticated data analytics

A feature of ACC research and evaluation activity is a focus on co-design when activities including evaluations are set up. ACC works co-operatively with a number of partner agencies and with people in industry and client groups who can provide additional insights.

Technically ACC is not a policy advisor to government, as this role in relation to accident compensation formally sits with MBIE. However, it provides input into the policy assessment process.

3.9 _ Te Puni Kōkiri

Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK), also known as the Ministry of Māori Development, was formed in 1990 as part of state sector reforms which separated it as a policy advisory ministry from most operational service delivery issues for Māori. In its earlier incarnations as the Department of Māori Affairs, Native Department and Protectorate Department it is one of the oldest New Zealand public sector institutions and its lineage dates back to 1840.

As an advisor to government, TPK has built its research capacity to provide well founded advice on policy issues. As of early 2018, this involves a team of 18 people (including a librarian and administration) in a ministry of about 350 people. About half the research and evaluation activity is done by internal staff and the balance, mainly evaluation work, contracted out. TPK's experience with external research groups has been generally favourable. Hence, while TPK has a focus on building internal research capability, it is happy to continue to use outside researchers in an appropriate balance.

Most internal research work involves the use of data collected by other agencies such as Stats NZ. An ongoing challenge is the shortage of providers in kaupapa Māori research.

Research priorities are developed by keeping a balance between long term priorities and responding quickly to immediate government priorities such as those arising from the 'First 100 days' of a new government.

3.10 _ Ministry for Women

The Ministry for Women is a small policy ministry which does a limited amount of in-house research. Much of it is qualitative rather than based on large scale surveys. Larger projects, such as the study of the causes of gender pay gaps, are contracted out, the study quoted being undertaken by Auckland University of Technology and the New Zealand Work Research Institute. The Ministry also collaborated with Stats NZ and the Southern Methodist Mission to use the IDI to look at young people including young mothers not in employment, and funded a study to understand digital harm to young people.

Data provided from other sources, including overseas sources, is used heavily where available, and the Ministry for Women undertakes and funds research relating to its key outcome areas where the information that tells a gendered story is not readily available.

Data analysis is important in providing input into policy recommendations.

An ongoing challenge
is the shortage of
providers in kaupapa
Māori research



3.11 _ Ministry for Pacific Peoples

The Ministry for Pacific Peoples (MPP) was renamed in 2015 from its former title of Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs. It focuses on the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of Pacific peoples in New Zealand. In 2013, 62.3 percent of the estimated 344,000 Pacific peoples in New Zealand were born here.

MPP is a small ministry. It has 42 staff of whom 11 are in the policy team, of which two are allocated to research and evaluation.

With such a small research resource, MPP relies heavily on research data produced elsewhere, such as Stats NZ, MBIE, MOH and MOE. The data are disseminated via reports such as the 2016/17 'Contemporary Pacific Status Report – A Snapshot of Pacific peoples in New Zealand'. The Ministry does, however, commission ad hoc reports from other researchers, such as a current NZIER study on the feasibility of a Pacific Cultural Centre in Auckland. Large studies like the NZIER feasibility work require additional budget funding.

MPP focuses on optimising the use of a small research resource. All ministry programmes and initiatives incorporate monitoring and evaluation components aimed at improving programme effectiveness and demonstrating impact. The ministry also engages with a wide range of population and Pacific people's agencies to facilitate data information and intelligence sharing across traditional agency boundaries.

3.12 _ The expanding role of Stats NZ

Stats NZ and its predecessor the Department of Statistics have always had a role in the production of social research data. The major contribution for many years was the five-yearly Census of Population and Dwellings (the Census) and additional questions attached to it. The Department of Statistics also collected other data which could be used for social research, and published administrative data collected by others in areas such as health, education, labour, taxation, benefits and pensions. Otherwise most of the regular data collections of the then Department were economic and financial data relating to primary and secondary industries, and commercial services.

The big shift of Stats NZ to a more active role in collecting social research came with the transfer of responsibility for the regular Employment Survey from the Department of Labour. Next came the development of the Household Income and Expenditure Series, the related Household Economic Survey (HES) and Survey of Family, Income and Employment (SoFIE) data sets. Initially these were one-off studies, but their value for providing policy advice to ministries and academic and NGO researchers resulted in them becoming regular surveys.⁶

The latest major development is the building of the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which allows administrative data from various government agencies to be linked while protecting the identities of individuals. This began with the linking of employer and employee data from Inland Revenue. Later, by treating Work and Income New Zealand beneficiary data as a quasi-employer, a fuller picture emerged of the pattern of movement of people between work and benefits.

The latest major development is the building of the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) which allows administrative data from various government agencies to be linked while protecting the identities of individuals

⁶ SoFIE ran between 2002 and 2010.

The addition of more data series allowed a fuller picture to emerge of who used income support and other social services. As of early 2018, about 40 data sets are now included in the IDI. Further work is continuing on refining the accuracy of the statistics and developing customised versions for particular user needs. Cross checking with Census data sets indicates that the IDI approach is often more accurate than the Census in collecting information on hard to enumerate people (such as transient young males) who may not fill out Census forms but access social services for one reason or another.

The long continuity and more recent expansion of the role of Stats NZ in collecting data for social research use is partly due to the important role it plays in providing the data needed to inform ministers. Its expertise in conducting large surveys and skill in the analysis of large data sets also gives it a comparative advantage when decisions have to be made about where new data collection requirements should be located.

In terms of the four critical success factors identified in this report (single sector focus, well-chosen research priorities, stable funding, effective relationships in the sector), Stats NZ scores highly on three. Only the focus on a wider data use rather than a defined sector of activity differs. Even in this respect, however, it has worked closely with sector departments to identify information priorities. And the development of data for wider use appears to be the only truly successful area to date of long term multi-sector social research, and the gap into which Stat NZ has stepped.

Other factors in the success of Stats NZ are its reputation for trustworthiness in protecting individual data identity, and the statutory independence of the Government Statistician.

To date, Stats NZ has not been adversely affected by changes in the preferred organisation of the state sector in New Zealand. The closest it came was during the 1990s when there was an initial government decision not to fund Stats NZ directly for the Household Expenditure and Income Surveys, but instead to ask the user departments to pay for the surveys. As the departments concerned had not been funded to do this, an impasse soon developed where it looked as though the surveys would have to be cancelled. When ministers and Treasury officials realised that this would mean a loss of valuable information about the economy, the initial decision was reversed. The realisation sank in that central funding was the economically efficient way to fund a widely used public good data set.





4 Single sector research institutions

Health research has always been more favourably funded than education research. It helps to be associated with socially prominent professions and medical researchers. It also helps to be in a field such as health which is viewed favourably by the public. Education is often a more contentious public issue

Single sector research institutes and research commissioning councils are those focused on single social sectors. They are also funded (at least for base line activities) as part of public sector expenditure. They appear to be the most durable of the public sector research organisations outside the core social sector departments, with which they are linked. Each has:

- a clear sector research focus
- well-chosen research priorities
- a stable, long term funding model, at least for base line funding
- effective relationships with the social sector delivery agencies and policy advisory ministries in their sector.

However, each differs in character. It is also noticeable that health research has always been more favourably funded than education research. It helps to be associated with socially prominent professions and medical researchers. It also helps to be in a field such as health which is viewed favourably by the public. Education is often a more contentious public issue.

While the focus on a single clear field of activity has in practice meant a focus on a single sector, it is also possible that other types of single focus approaches could be successful.

4.1 _ New Zealand Council for Educational Research (founded 1933)

The first such social research entity was the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), founded in 1933 with the aid of two five year block grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York. As the 1947-47 Yearbook records (p60):

“When the Corporation grants ceased in 1944, the Government passed legislation giving statutory existence to the Council, and since 1945 has made an annual grant of 3,000 pounds to it.”

Subsequent Yearbooks record the eventual increase in the amount of the annual grant. In 1953 the government grant was raised to 4,000 pounds and in 1959 to 6,000 pounds. Three thousand pounds (\$6,000) sounds a small amount of money from 21st century perspectives, however, in relation to mid-1940s prices and wages, £3,000 was sufficient to provide the annual salaries of several employees plus some associated costs. The Council also raised funds from other activities.



Over time and slowly, the grant built up and with it the size of the organisation as it had a record for good research work which was valued by the then Department of Education. This was possibly helped by the fact that the former head of NZCER, Dr Clarence Beeby, became Director General of Education. At the same time, part of the policy spending growth in the education sector took place within the Department (later Ministry) of Education. This set the pattern of 'two track' policy research, one inside and one outside the Department or Ministry. NZCER's focus was mainly on medium to long term issues, while the Department concentrated on current policy issues and evaluation.

Another feature of the shift to government funding was the incorporation of NZCER as a statutory entity. This gave it official recognition and provided a measure of independence which NZCER has always valued. The statutory functions require NZCER to:

- undertake and publish research
- furnish independent advice on education and like matters.

A further growth spurt in NZCER took place in the 1980s and again in the 2000s. NZCER has had an annual grant of \$1.45 million. In 2017 it had a staff of 62, equivalent to 57.3 FTE. Of these, 25 can be classified as researchers. Apart from administration, other staff focus on providing assessment for schools and adult learners, staff and student surveys tools for schools, and their support and publications.

The \$1.45 million grant is, of course, not sufficient to support an entity the size of NZCER. It enables NZCER to undertake some independent research and it provides a stable base level of long term funding. Other funding comes from contracts for contestable work and from its publishing and assessment activities. Much of the contestable research and evaluation is for the Ministry of Education. Other recent contracts have been with a diverse bodies including Te Taura Whiri te Reo Māori (the Māori Language Commission), Industry Training Organisations, the Education Council, Department of Corrections, Sport New Zealand, the Springboard Trust and the Commission for Financial Capability.

NZCER staff consulted for this report indicated that regular ongoing contact with schools and other institutions in the educational system help keep NZCER staff well informed about what is actually happening at the grass roots level of the system. This improved capacity to develop policy advice and identify where research was needed.

4.2 _ Health Research Council (founded 1938)

The second formally organised research group was the Health Research Council (HRC) established in 1938 as the Medical Research Council (1947-49 Yearbook p113). The Yearbook goes on to add:

"The Council is closely associated with the Department of Health, its function being to promote and correlate medical research work being done in New Zealand."

The initial status of HRC was not statutory. It was not until the Medical Research Council Act of 1950 that the Council became a legislative entity. The 1959 Yearbook (p137) recorded:



“This Council took over and developed the work of a departmental committee bearing the same name which had been in existence since 1938.”

While the Medical Research Council did not come into existence until after NZCER, it was the first of the two to be government funded. The greater generosity applied to medical and health research funding began at an early date. The 1950 Yearbook (p147) notes that the Council administered the Medical Research Endowment Fund “from which annual expenditure of 100,000 pounds is incurred in supporting research projects of the University of Otago, the University of Auckland, and the institutions of the Auckland Hospital Board”. In contrast, NZCER received a grant of only £7,000 in 1960 (1962 Yearbook p241-2).

By 1962 the Yearbook (p145) noted that the Medical Research Endowment Fund grant had increased to £128,000 and “the Council employs a staff of 90 full time workers, and some 40 associated workers contribute to the activities of the Council”.

While the primary focus of the original Council was on the biological and chemical aspects of research, it also developed a wider health-related focus which is more properly classified as social research. This springs out of a focus on epidemiology (population-related health issues) and specialist areas such as occupational health. Ultimately this led to its name being changed in 1990 to the more accurate Health Research Council and its functions being recognised in a new Act.

The relative generosity of health research funding (related originally to its medical purposes) has permitted the development of long term social research studies such as the world renowned Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study (popularly known as the Dunedin study)

In addition, the relative generosity of health research funding (related originally to its medical purposes) has permitted the development of long term social research studies such as the world renowned Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Study (popularly known as the Dunedin study) and the Christchurch Health and Development Study. The studies began with a sample of a birth cohort, and continued assessing people into adulthood for a range of background factors and outcomes, providing valuable information for other more frugally funded research sectors. This pattern has continued to the present day. For example, studies of the impact of home insulation and dampness levels on family health and wellbeing were done by the University of Otago, where the Dunedin study is based, and funded by HRC rather than Housing New Zealand. These findings had significant input into legislation requiring landlords to upgrade the insulation standards of private rental accommodation.

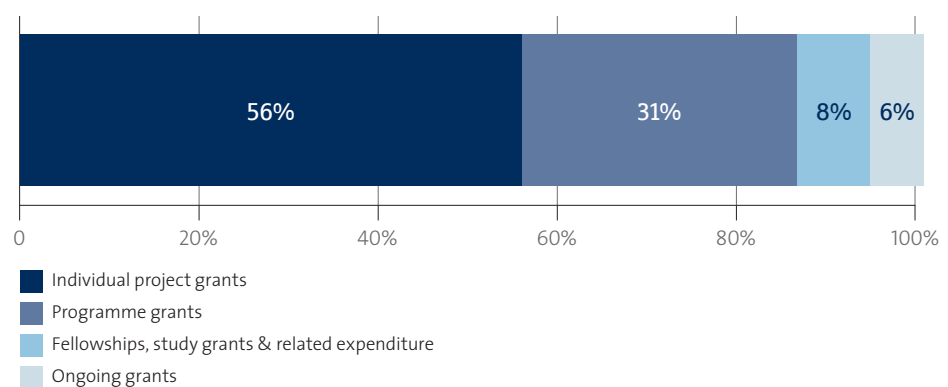
HRC was allocated \$92.986 million in 2017-18. About 60 percent of this is used for medical research rather than health-related social research. Funding flows through the MBIE budget, but there is close cooperation with the Ministry of Health on the National Health Research Strategy, launched in 2017. This embodies four guiding principles: research excellence, transparency, partnership with Māori and collaboration. There are also four strategic priorities:

- invest in research that addresses the health needs of New Zealanders
- create a vibrant research environment in the health sector
- build and strengthen pathways for translating research findings into policy and practice
- advance innovative ideas and commercial opportunities.

HRC, the Ministry of Health and MBIE lead the implementation of these priorities.

Most research grants are researcher-initiated, with less than 10 percent allocated via requests for a proposal (RFPs). The majority of RFPs are initiated through the HRC partnership programme.

Graph 1 _ Current HRC funding pattern



Percentages have been rounded so don't equal 100 percent.

4.3 _ The Families Commission to 2014 (founded 2004)

Whether the Families Commission as originally set up in 2004 should be classified as a single sector research institute is a little debatable. While most of its focus was on areas then covered by the Ministry of Social Development, there was some overspill into areas traditionally covered by the Ministries of Education, Health, Justice and Te Puni Kōkiri. However, the concept of family research is probably cohesive enough to be treated as a single sector of research.

The two roles – family research and family advocacy – are rather different in nature, and the second is potentially a political minefield. Advocacy often involves drawing public attention to issues that the government of the day would rather not deal with.

The Commission dealt with the advocacy objective by focusing on community information and awareness activities. This activity dented the funding available for research. A full year grant which started at over \$7 million in the early years was not as generous to research as it at first seemed because of the cost of the advocacy role. As late as 2011-2012 the Commission was spending only \$3.548 million or 43 percent of its budget directly on research.

On the research front, it took longer than some initial sponsors of the Commission expected to develop family-centered research expertise. As late as 2012, the annual stated (p8):

“2011-12 has seen the Commission continue its transition towards becoming a centre of excellence for knowledge about Families and Whānau.”



The decision in 2013/14 to turn the Families Commission into Superu, a multi-sector research and evaluation institution, launched the Commission into a particularly high risk area for small New Zealand organisations

Despite this, the Families Commission undertook a significant volume of research. Whether this would have enabled a family research organisation to become a long term, durable part of the local research community is less certain. Limited practical connections with government ministries and agencies actually delivering programmes to families was always a problem. The lack of a clear focus on key research and evaluation priorities for the government also meant that Families Commission research was marginal to government interests. In terms of the success criteria identified in this study (single sector research focus, well-chosen research priorities, stable funding, effective relationships in the sector), the Families Commission research entity at its startup lacked two of the key factors, and with 20/20 hindsight probably did not move sufficiently to develop them.

The decision in 2013/14 to turn the Commission into the Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu for short), a multi-sector research and evaluation institution, ended the specific single sector development phase for research and launched the Commission into a particularly high risk area for small New Zealand organisations. The outcome of this decision is described in a later section.

Why not others?

In theory, other single sector public research institutes could have been developed in New Zealand, at least for the large sectors. However, apart from the Families Commission, this did not happen. Lack of funding and the low priority of social research spending by the government appear to be large parts of the reason.

It also takes a long time to develop first class research capacity and credibility, and this puts government funded organisations working on public policy issues in something of a time bind. The patience of ministers may run out before the organisation can demonstrate credible and useful research results. In this respect, both NZCER and HRC social research functions had fortuitous external factors to help them.

The nearest possibility for a further publicly funded single sector research organisation was the Law Commission, founded under the Law Commission Act 1985. Section 6(1)(b) of the Act empowers it “to initiate, sponsor, and carry out such studies and research as it thinks expedient for the proper discharge of its function”. The Law Commission exercises this power when carrying out its law reform functions because most of its projects involve substantial legal research before any reform recommendations are made.

The Law Commission has not, however, developed any specific social research role. Some of its work cites and/or collates social research but the Law Commission itself does not generally undertake primary research. The Law Commission regularly consults with the public on its law reform projects and this can result in some information being gathered which might be described as social research. However, in practice this is directed to the specific law reform issues the Law Commission is considering. Most justice sector research actually takes place at the Ministry of Justice or is commissioned by it.



The Law Commission website defines its role as follows:

“The Law Commission’s role is to promote the systematic review, reform, and development of the law of New Zealand. As an independent Crown Entity, its functions are to review the law and make recommendations for improvement.”

Another, if more remote possibility, was the former Retirement Commission, which funded some social research. However, its refocus as the Commission for Financial Literacy and Retirement Income and then as the Commission for Financial Capability moved it away from core social research and towards an orientation to the financial services industry and a public information role.

In passing, it is noted that some universities have research institutes as adjuncts to their teaching role. These, however, lie outside the scope of this report. It is noted that the usual pattern is alignment to a single sector or faculty.

This report has not investigated Māori research outside the scope of Te Puni Kōkiri, nor the research work of the former Alcoholic Liquor Advisory Council.

5 Multi-sector research institutions

If running a single sector research organisation is difficult enough in New Zealand, operating a multi-sector research institute or being responsible for commissioning applied social research in many different social sectors has traditionally been a problem area. Disadvantages include the lack of specific expertise in the many different fields the entity seeks to span, difficulties in identifying real priorities which will resonate with the government or funding body, the weakness of links with operational departments, and conflict over who is responsible for giving research-based policy advice to the government. In some cases funding has also been a problem.

All these factors are accentuated when the body (unlike Treasury, which does provide advice across sectors) is outside the core government departments and does not report directly to a high-ranking minister. While this position outside of government proper gives the institution more independence, it also makes the entity more vulnerable to unfavourable reactions from the government of the day. This is especially so if it is providing advice or information on politically sensitive issues. The government cannot do without its core government departments, but it can do without particular advisory bodies or research institutions.

This sections looks at the outcomes of some of these institutions.

While this position outside of government proper gives the institution more independence, it also makes the entity more vulnerable to unfavourable reactions from the government of the day



5.1 _ New Zealand Planning Council (1977-91)

The New Zealand Planning Council was set up by the government in 1977 on the recommendation of a task force on economic planning. While it was predominantly an advisory agency, over its life it commissioned a significant number of policy and research reports on economic and social topics. The last of these (not actually published until 1993) was a paper by Paul Callister called 'Tomorrows skills 1993 Update'. The early chair of the Council, Sir Frank Holmes, also played a significant role in the conference which produced the seminal 1981 Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report 'The Welfare State in Crisis'.

Although the Council was established under a National Government, it was disbanded by the subsequent National Government which came into office in 1990. It was not regarded as providing the type of advice the new government wished to receive. National planning as a concept was out of favour with the new administration. The Government priorities by this stage were those of cutting fiscal costs, reducing social expenditure by more rigorous targeting and conditionality, implementing measures to drive efficiencies in public sector organisations, and making the economy more market orientated. These were not the focus of the New Zealand Planning Council. Abolishing it also provided a small fiscal saving in tune with the fiscal objectives of the 'Mother of All Budgets' in 1991.

The termination of the Council was embodied in the New Zealand Planning Council Dissolution Act of 8 August 1991.

5.2 _ Commission for the Future (1977-1982)

The Commission for the Future was the second of the 'broad spectrum' advisory and research bodies set up in the late 1970s during an era of interest in national planning. It was always small scale in terms of official funding, its initial establishment being, apart from a chairman, two investigating officers and a secretary typist (annual report 1978 p3).

It did, however, generate some enthusiastic participation and part time contribution from a range of academics and public servants. The Commission set up three research panels covering technology, systems and modelling, and the individual in the future.

For a limited-budget organisation it produced an interesting range of reports ranging from a social survey to measure public attitudes to living standards in New Zealand to a study on the impact of a nuclear war on New Zealand.

In the end, the government of the day was not really interested in the work the Commission was producing. The end for the Commission was announced in the 1982 and last annual report (p8). This referred to "the Government's recent decision to integrate the work now done by the Commission for the Future with that of the Planning Council".



5.3 _ Social Sciences Research Fund (1979-1990)

The last and smallest of the special research initiatives set up before 1980 was the Social Sciences Research Fund, overseen by the Social Science Research Fund Committee (SSRFC), which was established in 1979 with the then Department of Social Welfare (DSW) providing the secretariat.

DSW's 1987 annual report noted (p18) that the SSRFC "was established in 1979 to provide funding support for social science research conducted outside government agencies". The report goes on to note that in the year to 31 March 1987 the SSRFC made 12 grants totalling \$175,000.

This was clearly a very small amount of money. The 1989 DSW annual report (p56) noted that the 1987 report of the Independent Review Committee chaired by Judge (now Dame) Silvia Cartwright include the assessment that "the resources now available to the SSRFC are totally inadequate for the needs of social research in this country".

The Cartwright Committee proposed that the SSRFC be replaced by a Social Science Research Council, to be an autonomous body under its own Act and covering a wider range of research. It also proposed that funding be raised to \$1.35 million in 1988/89 and \$3.35 million by 1992/93. The governing council of the new body was to include a mix of academic researchers, independent researchers, government department representatives and those of community groups. This would balance a focus on researcher driven proposals with an assessment of their policy and operational relevance.

Judge Cartwright's proposals did not find favour with the government and instead the SSRFC was abolished and merged into the new Foundation for Research Science and Technology (FRST) with high level priorities set by the Ministry of Research Science and Technology (MORST).

Casualties of the change included an SSRFC initiative to set up a social researcher information network and a focus on current social policy issues.

5.4 _ New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development (1992-1995)

The New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development (SR and D) experienced the shortest life so far of any public sector organisation set up specifically to undertake social research. It was organised as a commercially oriented Crown Research Institute (CRI) with an initial capital injection but no ongoing government funding. It was expected to eventually become profitable and pay dividends to the Government. This never happened.



The New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development experienced the shortest life so far of any public sector organisation set up specifically to undertake social research. It had an initial capital injection but no ongoing government funding

This wholly commercial orientation of SR and D was at odds with the recommendations of the 1990 interdepartmental working party on operational policy research which had recommended (p44) that a council for generic social policy research be set up and that its research be “purchased by the Government in the same way it purchases policy advice, with the funding for this work appearing in the estimates”. In other words, the new organisation should be grant funded.

The exact role of MORST in converting these recommendations into a proposal to instead set up a fully commercial CRI is unclear. It may have simply been implementing an approach which it had been required to undertake by the government. Other informants have indicated that MORST itself drove the process. This was partly because MORST, a new organisation at the time, needed to find a role for social science researchers now that the era of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) was over and the physical and biological science groups had been parcelled out as CRIs. At the time, MORST was also seeking to extend its research advisory oversight role in social sciences. However, in the time available for this report it has not been possible to fully clarify the facts.

The 1994 ‘New Avenues’ report (p22) noted that in the wake of the demise of the New Zealand Planning Council mentioned above the proposed Institute was enjoined by the 1991 Ministerial Science Task Group “to be a focal point and centre of excellence for social science research with a focus on the application of social science research to economic, social and cultural development”. The New Avenues assessment continued: “this appeared to be a tall order for such a relatively small institute compared to the other CRIs, and one it failed to deliver”.

The Institute starts up

In any event, the Institute was set up with a prominent chairperson (Alan Bollard, later Secretary to the Treasury and Governor of the Reserve Bank), with a well-regarded researcher (Peggy Koopman-Boyden) as Director. Its mission statement indicated that it aimed

“to enhance the social and economic wellbeing of New Zealand through undertaking and applying research into the development of New Zealand’s human resources”.
(Half yearly report December 1992 p3)

In the 1992-93 annual report, however, the Chairman noted (p3) that the Institute “has yet to establish a critical mass of researchers”. The attached annual accounts indicated a pattern where expenses of \$1,150,000 exceeded research contract revenue of \$808,000, and the Institute began to consume a significant part of its start-up capital injection. Significantly the report also indicated that, for much of its contract work, the Institute was (p4) reliant on having taken over FRST-funded programmes set up under the previous DSIR administration.

The 1993-94 annual report revealed an even more difficult financial situation (p2). Revenue had risen to \$1,253,000 as more contracts were gained, but expenses had risen even more to \$1,847,000. Operating from two centres (Christchurch and Wellington) did not help, but the main problem was lack of grant funding or actually profitable research contracts to cover rising costs. In 1993-94 the operating loss jumped from \$341,000 to \$579,000.

It is hard to understand how it could have been concluded that the solution to a problem of inadequate research funding was to set up an organisation without any funding

The Director's report (p2) spoke hopefully of "gradual expansion involving the wider expansion of research networks". However, the Chairman's covering report (p1), after referring to a planned injection of \$1 million more in capital, indicated that "The Board is now reviewing its options before making a recommendation to the Shareholding Ministers". The following fiscal year the Institute was abolished.

Factors in the demise of the Institute

The Institute was attempting to operate in a multi-sector field, which in itself was an enormous hurdle. In retrospect, the funding structure imposed on the Institute was one of the strangest decisions ever made by a New Zealand government in the area of social research. It is hard to understand how it could have been concluded that the solution to a problem of inadequate research funding identified by officials was to set up an organisation seeking to supply social research without any funding – indeed, one which needed to drain resources away from other providers in order to survive.

As the 1995 Hawke Committee pointed out, government was the primary beneficiary of applied social science research. As the client it needed to provide the funding either directly by grants or through contract funding from other government agencies. However, in the stringent conditions which applied to departmental funding in the wake of the 'Mother of all Budgets' in 1991, additional departmental contract funding simply did not exist. Indeed, some organisations had reduced research monies available. The then Department of Social Welfare, for example, had to cut back its own research programme in order to provide for new financial forecasting capability required of it by the Government.

As the New Avenues report indicated, the Institute was far too small to take on the ambitious role suggested for it. It could not build joint programmes with other agencies if it had no funding to put in the pot. In retrospect, the Institute at its start-up point lacked all four of the key success factors identified in this study (single sector research focus, well-chosen research priorities, stable funding, effective relationships in the sector). Three of them could possibly have been developed over time. The successful NZCER, for example, started out as a very small organisation but had a clear sector focus, time to develop expertise and links with its sector, and guaranteed base funding for its first 10 years. Time was something the Institute did not have because of its funding model. The conclusion is that while multi-sector applied social research is something of a graveyard for social research institutions in New Zealand, one of the fastest routes to the graveyard is a lack of any form of adequate base line funding.

5.5 _ The Families Commission/Superu from 2014

The Families Commission was set up as a mixed family research and family advocacy organisation in 2004 as part of a coalition deal arrangement. The transition to the more challenging role of becoming the multi-sector Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu) took place in the 2013-2014 fiscal year. As this changed the nature of the Commission, the second era is treated as that of a separate entity.





The Families Commission Amendment Act of March 2014 required the Commission to:

“Monitor and evaluate programmes and interventions in the social sector, and to provide social science research into the key issues, programmes and interventions across that sector.”

This was a massive new task which was accompanied by only a modest rise in funding. Funding rose from \$7.124 million in 2012-13 to \$9.689 million in 2014-15. Ultimately, the revenue was increased to \$14.092 in 2016-17, though this included \$1.029 million of commissioned social science which was not available for general research purposes. By 2016-17 Superu was spending 50 percent of its outlays on the new function of ‘social science leadership’, and its own family research spending at \$3.381 million was only 24 percent of the budget and lower in absolute terms than five years previously.

The scale of the task of spanning three major roles in one organisation was close to a mission impossible given the limited funding available, the boundary issues with other social sector research entities and the limited timeframe within which the government seemed to expect results

The scale of the task of spanning three major roles in one organisation was close to a mission impossible given the limited funding available, the boundary issues with other social sector research entities and the limited timeframe within which the government seemed to expect results. Plus, without the administrative clout of Treasury or the State Services Commission, it is hard to see how Superu could have intervened to “...monitor and evaluate...” the programmes of other government department and agencies.

A further problem arose from the decision to add the new function during a period of financial stringency. Consequently, the initial boost in funding was found within the Social Development portfolio by cutting the MSD research budget accordingly. This meant much MSD research had to be abandoned. It also compromised the relationship between Superu and MSD for a period.

On top of this, the new Superu board and management had to restructure an organisation which was orientated to an entirely different purpose. This all took time.

In the event, Superu adopted a number of initiatives to boost its social science profile, including:

- setting up The Hub, an online social science information network which eventually provided access to information on 6,500 research papers and projects
- developing a publishing protocol
- developing an evaluation techniques handbook
- producing an evidence rating scale
- producing a guide on policy evidence
- assisting the community and voluntary sector with evaluation training projects
- running seminars
- running an annual Evidence to Action conference
- establishing a social science research and evaluation protocol
- identifying a set of cross-sectoral research directions.

Superu is thus the latest casualty in the problematic area of multi sector research

This infrastructure development filled a gap, and The Hub was mandated in Superu’s legislation. However this focus did not seem to be what the government wanted, or at least not what it decided it actually wanted after Superu had operated for a period. By then, the government goal had become that of obtaining more immediate cross-sector information that it could use for social sector expenditure policy decisions or ‘social investment’. This more immediate information source seemed to lie in analysing the information in public sector administrative data bases. In 2017, as page 10 of the annual report notes, the Families Commission/Superu was notified:

“the Government has decided to disestablish Superu and reconfigure its functions and money to align with and support the social investment approach”.

Superu is thus the latest casualty in the problematic area of multi sector research. Apart from the usual difficulties of multi-sector research for a small organisation, particular problems were:

- the lack of an agreed common focus which was fully understood and agreed between ministers, the Superu board, management and the Superu staff
- in turn, this lack of a clear focus compromised the priorities chosen by Superu – developing sector infrastructure rather than providing the information the government wanted for policy decisions. The latter required resources Superu was not well set up to provide
- the major difficulties of reconfiguring one organisation into another with a very different purpose and requiring a quite different set of skills on the part of management and staff. In retrospect trying to convert the Families Commission into Superu rather than starting a new organisation was probably a mistake
- the gap between Superu and the social sector delivery ministries became even wider as it became theoretically responsible for advising on the whole social sector, a task for which it had neither the resources nor the administrative clout.

5.6 _ The Social Investment Agency (2017)

The Social Investment Agency (SIA) is the latest of the multi-sector organisations set up in the public sector outside the framework of existing government departments. It is not primarily a research organisation but focuses on using information technology to measure outcomes as recorded in a range of data bases of people accessing government services. This provides information for evaluating the degree to which people’s needs are met, and of the overall fiscal impact of programmes as an aid to decision making.

The SIA, established on 1 July 2017, has staffing of 52 FTE and a budget of \$25.8 million spread over four years (Budget Statement 25 May 2017). Unlike the former Social Research Institute, it is fully government funded.



It is distinctive in being established with a clear focus and set of priorities which relates to the April 2017 Cabinet decision which set it up. This directs it to use the new cross-departmental databases provided by the Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure to develop the architecture, whole-of-system advice and new approach to social investment. The intention was that this whole-of-government perspective should put the government in a better position to make informed decisions about the likely system wide or public sector wide consequences of specific decisions and of their effects on the population. By measuring effectiveness the government could move closer to purchasing outcomes rather than inputs in its fiscal decisions.

As of early 2018, it is early days for SIA. At the point of its establishment it had more of the initial success factors identified in this study than some of its predecessors in multi-sector research. These include a clear set of priorities and a fully funded budget covering four years. It was thus set up with more resources than some earlier initiatives. Less clear are its relationships with social sector departments, though initial feedback on this from the interviews is positive.

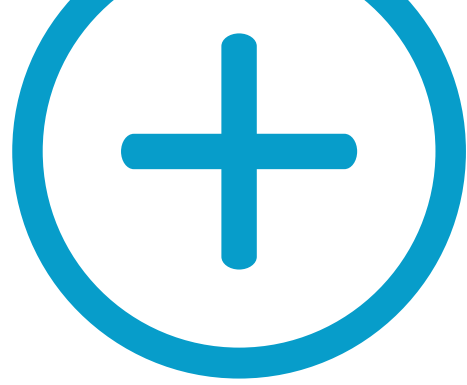
This being said, the clear priorities the SIA had in mid-2017 were those of the now former government.⁷ Based on past outcomes for such entities in similar situations, the future of SIA would seem to depend on how well it can align its direction with the requirements of the new government.

A longer term consideration is the relationship of administrative data matching research to other types of research. Administrative data research in itself only provides part of the information needed to design successful social intervention programmes. It may be noted that the history of individual public sector research also began with the analysis of departmental administrative records. It then proceeded to the use of surveys to fill information gaps, then moved on to developing policies and programmes to deal with identified problems, and then to programme evaluation to assess the effectiveness of these interventions. As of early 2018, SIA is still mainly at the first stage. An issue is where these subsequent developments will take place.

The clear priorities the SIA had in mid-2017 were those of the now former government. Based on past outcomes for such entities, the future of SIA would seem to depend on how well it can align its direction with the requirements of the new government



⁷ The National-led government, which championed the social investment approach, was replaced by a Labour-led government following elections in September 2017.



6 Other social research areas

There are several other areas where publicly funded social research occurs in New Zealand, though outside the areas of applied social research in core social sectors which is the focus of this study.

6.1 _ Marsden Fund Social Science Panel (1994-present)

Not included in the multi-sector grouping in the previous section is the Marsden Fund Social Science Panel grants. Marsden Fund grants are not intended to cover operational research or any current research priorities of the government of the day. Funding is based on researcher applications, with an average of only 12 percent of applications succeeding in obtaining a grant.

The Marsden Fund focuses on supporting high quality research, much of which can be classified as 'blue sky' research rather than that related to current social policy issues. A key purpose is the development of researchers and research teams. The Marsden Fund has a current budget of \$11.07 million and accepts applications from 21 different research sub-sectors. The allocation panel is made up of seven university academics and one other member.

6.2 _ Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences (2004-2010)

The Building Research Capacity in the Social Sciences (BRCSS) programme was announced in 2003 and initially ran from 2004 to 2009. It had a five year grant of \$8 million from the Tertiary Education Commission, and was intended to cover new and emerging researchers in sociology, social policy, social work, criminology and gender studies. The focus was on developing researchers and their capacity rather than research per se.

The programme was extended for one year in 2010, but thereafter government funding stopped. The official reason for this has not been ascertained.

When government funding of BRCSS ended, a group of social researchers set up Engaged Social Science (ESocSci) assisted by small amounts of funding from universities to cover some administration costs. ESocSci focuses on building networks between researchers.

6.3 _ Cross Departmental Research Fund (1997-2009)

The Cross Departmental Research Fund (CDRF) was set up in 1997 under the name Departmental Contestable Research Pool, and changed its name in 2001. It has not been included in the multi-sector social research grouping because it was open to all departments, not just the social sector departments. However, it shared a similar fate of a short life expectancy.



The aim of the CDRF was to increase departmental capability to meet the policy advice needs of ministers. Objectives included supporting the government's strategic policies, catalysing new research relationships within and between departments, and developing a portfolio of research activity supporting government decision-making.

The CDRF was administered under Vote Science and Technology, and its processes run first by FRST and later by the Royal Society of New Zealand. In both cases the administering body worked closely with MORST which advised the Minister of Science on recommended projects. Most were small, short term projects of two to three years. These included several social research projects.

Annual funding was intended to be at least \$3 million but in later years was less than this. It was wound up in 2009 as part of a reprioritisation of government expenditure towards business research and development grants. However, some previously approved projects may have had residual funding until later.

6.4 University research institutes

Also outside the scope of this report are university research institutes. Some of these, however, undertake programme or contract research for government departments. No analysis of these institutes has been done here. In passing, it may be noted that some appear to have a single discipline or faculty focus, and a kind of de facto base-load funding from associated university teaching. Their critical relationships are with funding bodies.

7 Independent economic research

Broadly defined, social research has always had a significant role in the New Zealand economy in the form of market research for commercial enterprises. However, this activity lies well outside the terms of reference of this report.

While most types of core social research on public sector topics were financially unattractive to private sector organisations, there was one major exception. This was the development of economic research firms from the late 1950s onward. These businesses were able to find paying commercial clients for most of their research. Their activities also had public sector spinoffs to a degree.

The main entities in this areas were:

- Business and Economic Research Ltd (BERL), founded in 1957
- New Zealand Institute of Economic Research (NZIER), founded in 1958
- Infometrics, founded in 1984
- Motu Research and Education Foundation, founded in 2006.

BERL and Infometrics are private businesses, although provide information and comment on public issues. NZIER and Motu have different structures which impacts favourably on their ability to fund 'public good' research not funded by external clients.

NZIER was set up as a non-profit organisation in the wake of the 1955 report of the Royal Commission on the Monetary Banking and Credit System, and the concern in business and official circles (partly generated by the high number of votes being secured by the Social Credit Party) that the New Zealand public was poorly informed about major economic issues. NZIER defined its role as “economic research in the interests of the public good”.

NZIER became best known for its quarterly economic forecasts. However, it also undertook profitable research for the private sector and public agencies. As a non-profit organisation it did not have to pay dividends. Hence these profits were available for use to fund a number of wider public good research. NZIER has a dedicated public good research section.

Motu was set up as a charity (actually two separate charities) to undertake and disseminate public policy research and foster research capability building. As a charity it was non-taxable, could attract donations and endowments, and did not have to pay dividends. It also obtains a small part of its funding from grants from private and public sector patrons, but most comes from research contracts.

Much of Motu’s contract funding is long term, and it has a policy of insisting on being able to publish the results of its research.

These four economic research entities have a mixture of commercial and not-for-profit structures. However, key factors in their long term survival (other than the usual features of good management and competent professional staff) include:

- operating mainly in areas where there are paying commercial clients
- lean and flexible structures
- not having to carry the financial and administrative overhead burden of government compliance and reporting requirements.

Unfortunately, most of these features are not available to public sector social research institutions.





8 Research policy reviews 1981-2010

Between 1981 and 2010 a series of reviews were carried out on or partly on social research or, as the terminology of the time often preferred, social science. These are described chronologically here.

8.1 _ Social Science Research Fund Committee review (1981)

The first of these reviews was carried out by the Social Science Research Fund Committee (SSRFC) itself to establish areas of priority for social science research in New Zealand.

When SSRFC was established in 1979, the initial areas of priority were conflict, social policies and impact, social expenditure, and human environment and conflict. In 1981, SSRFC surveyed a range of social scientists in New Zealand and asked for indications of wider priorities in research.

The result from the SSRFC perspective was dismaying. Respondents suggested more than 160 different priority areas, and the list of suggestions in the report appendix was longer than the body of the report itself.⁸

SSRFC concluded (p3) that “efforts to get multi-disciplinary consultation and involvement were not successful, although a number of respondents stressed the importance of multi-disciplinary research”.

A second conclusion was (p4) that “the range and variety of topics suggested reflects the diversity of interests and expertise of those involved in social science research”.

Rather despondently the report concluded that “given the outcomes of this exercise to date, some questions arise as to the value of the approach”.

Underlying themes which were to emerge in later surveys were the diversity of the social research sector, the difficulty of setting priorities, and the even greater difficulty of getting cooperative research across the boundaries of academic disciplines. Not specifically identified but underlying the flood of proposals was the very limited research funding available for very wide social sectors.

8.2 _ The Couchman Report (1984)

Next to emerge was Paul Couchman’s report ‘Policy Making for Social Sciences in Government Departments’, done for the social science sector of DSIR. The departmental focus to a degree moved away from the unmanageably wide scope of the SSRFC survey.

⁸ This experience was reprised in 2015-16 when Superu facilitated a wide consultation on research priorities which generated a huge ‘wish list’.

Couchman also provided (p9) an estimate of the number of social science positions in government departments.

Table 1 _ Estimated number of social science positions in government departments, 1972-1982

	1972	1978	1982
Education	10	18.8	29.6
Internal Affairs	-	-	9.9
Justice	10	9.9	14.1
Labour	56	41.6	1.4
NZ Forest	-	1.0	5.6
DSIR	12	9.0	11.3
Social Welfare	12	19.8	28.2
% of total science positions	1.4	2.1	1.5

These figures, of course, are for identified positions only and exclude those in institutes outside the boundaries of the department. They are also subject to the restrictive definition of what constitutes a social scientist. The figures, however, indicate the tiny scale of departmental social research in relation to the government's involvement in research in the physical and biological sciences. Social scientists constituted only between 1.4 percent and 2.1 percent of all science positions.

Couchman concluded that much departmental research was of poor quality in relation to academic science. The research effort had been fragmented and, in the past, poorly coordinated.

Couchman also concluded that:

- the political sensitivity of much social research meant that many areas had not been adequately covered
- as a result, "it also makes government funded social research politically vulnerable"
- this vulnerability was aggravated by the methodological problems of the social sciences.

Couchman's proposals were:

- transfer staff involved in departmental social research from the 'executive/clerical' class of the public service to the 'science occupational' class
- establish an Independent Social Research Institute
- social science research should be controlled by an independent social science research committee (as in the United Kingdom).

The independent institute was not set up.



8.3 _ The Judge Cartwright Report (1987)

By 1987, the government concluded that a new independent review of the social science research area was required. Accordingly Judge Sylvia Cartwright was appointed to chair a review of SSRFC.

The Cartwright Committee came to a number of conclusions, including:

- SSRFC should be replaced by a Social Science Research Council, which was to be an autonomous body with its own Act
- to achieve wide accountability, the composition of the Council was to be a mix of university academics, independent researchers, representatives of government departments and representatives of community groups
- a wider range of research was to be funded
- to facilitate this, government grants to the new Council would begin at \$1.35 million in 1988/89, rising to \$3.35 million by 1992/93.

The Cartwright proposals did not find favour with the Government.

8.4 _ Working Party on Operational Social Policy Research (1990)

The recommendations of the Cartwright report remained unaddressed for a period, but finally on 2 May 1990 Cabinet “agreed that greater emphasis be given to social research aimed at supporting broad aspects of social policy formation”. (CM ART(90) M5/3)

This led to the setting up of an officials’ working party to develop proposals.’ The Report of the Working Party on Operational Social Policy Research emerged on 30 August 1990.

From p7 onwards the report laid out the long history and large number of proposals for general social policy research in New Zealand. These were:

- National Development Conference (1969)
- Social Development Council (1975)
- National Research Advisory Council (1977)
- The New Zealand Planning Council (1982)
- The Law Commission (1988)
- The Royal Commission on Social Policy (1986-88)
- The Ministry of Women’s Affairs (1989)
- The Science and Technology Advisory council (undated)
- The Federation of New Zealand Social Science Organisations (1990).

On p27 the working party gave a pessimistic summary of the limited success of past efforts to achieve cooperation in interdepartmental ventures. Such ventures were often “slow to reach decisions and inclined to effect unsatisfactory compromises”.

Successful cooperative projects had generally been “less complex and narrower in focus. In short they tended not to deal with general social policy issues”.

The working group examined a number of proposals, and came up four which it regarded as workable (p32):

1. a Ministry for Social Policy
2. a Government Council for Social Policy Research
3. a fund administered by an interdepartmental committee
4. setting up this committee.

The working party proposed that the Government Council for Social Policy Research receive an ongoing grant of \$1.6 million plus GST, plus establishment costs of \$0.6 million. This was to be new money and “not be established at the expense of existing operational or research vote”.

This did not happen.

8.5 _ New Avenues for Crown Funded Social Science Research (1994)

This report to the Chief Scientist of the MORST was prepared by Health Research and Analytic Services. It analysed the number and distribution of people professionally qualified in the social sciences. It concluded that, excluding interviewers, there were then about 4,518 people involved in some sort of social research. The biggest group (1,755) was involved in market research and analysis.

Table 2 _ Estimate of expenditure on social research undertaken, 1991-1992

	\$ million
Universities	10.6
Government Sector	10.8
Business	4.0
Total	25.4

Only part of this would be classified as core social research in terms of this report.

A key conclusion of the New Avenues report was:

“one of the major consequences of this lengthy period of restricted funding has been the ‘underdevelopment’ of New Zealand’s current social science research infrastructure”.



The report (p57) called for “putting into place a mechanism to identify and reach agreement on what are the fundamental social science research questions or issues that need to be addressed in the next 10 to 15 years”.

Specific alternative options were:

- a new Social Science Research Council to be set up by statute
- grafting research proposals onto existing agencies
- leaving existing agencies operating as they are and hoping key issues would be addressed.

In the event, no new Social Science Research Council was set up, and no agreed national social research agenda emerged.

8.6 _ The Hawke Committee (1995)

The proposals of the Official Working Group and the New Avenues report had been largely ignored by the government, and an alternative initiative to set up a profit-orientated Crown social research organisation collapsed in 1995. This was then followed by another social science review chaired by Professor Gary Hawke. (The author was a member of this review.) The Hawke Committee produced the report ‘Drawing on the Evidence’.

The Hawke Committee made a number of recommendations, including pointing out that the government was the primary beneficiary of applied social research. One way or another it had to fund the research it wanted. However, unlike several earlier committees, the Hawke Committee did not make any specific proposals on funding amounts or mechanisms.

The Hawke Committee also urged Cabinet to reiterate the mandate of FRST to be proactive about developing the social science industry so that the needs for social science research could be met more easily in the future.

8.7 _ The O’Loughlin Report (1996)

Colin O’Loughlin’s 1996 report to the MORST was entitled ‘A Review of the Management of the Interface with and the Boundaries Between Departmental Operational Research and Research Funded by the PGSF’. The latter initials refer to the Public Good Science Fund administered by FRST.

While the report also covered areas other than social research, the conclusions in relation to the social sector are interesting. O’Loughlin comments (p4) “in social science research the boundary is poorly defined. Poor boundary definition leads to gaps in research coverage”.

In the background what was going on was a conflict of views between MORST/FRST and the portfolio ministries over who had responsibility for, and should therefore have the funding for, long term research in each portfolio area.



O'Loughlin noted (p6) that “the way in which PGSF-funded research interfaces with other research has become increasingly contentious”. The report goes on to note that DSW (p12) thought that “FRST had focussed narrowly” while Stats NZ (p13) was “very disenchanted with FRST”. The departments felt they were being denied research funding by FRST and was channelling most of the available money towards university-based researchers.

In response to this difficult situation, O'Loughlin proposed (p27) that “an additional National Science Strategy (NSS) for applied social science be set up” and that “MORST in conjunction with Ministers and departmental officials, develop a research programme...which particularly targets cross portfolio operational research”.

The issue, as always, was where the additional funding for this proposed new research entity was to come from. However, as described in section 6.3, a small Cross Departmental Research Fund was set up in 1997. It covered all departments and not just the social sector and, while it functioned, it did fund several social research projects.

8.8 _ The Hill Report (1997)

Dr Roberta Hill's 1997 report was less a policy report than a summary of the situation in 17 fields of social research, with short papers written by experts in each field. Ten of these fields were described as being based in one of the foundation disciplines, while the other seven were 'multi-disciplinary or population'.

Dr Hill's unsurprising conclusion was that the field of social sciences in New Zealand is very broad. This was the issue that the original SSRFC review struggled with in trying to identify research priorities.

8.9 _ Social Science Reference Group (2001)

The 2001 interim report of the Social Science Reference Group focussed on the theme 'How Social Science can better inform Social Policy Advice'. Its recommendations were grouped around three themes:

1. improving connections
2. increasing resources
3. enhancing capabilities.

For each area, a number of specific recommendations were made. For example, the increasing connections proposed a regular social policy conference to be organised by MSD,⁹ a professional journal and secondments between departments. Resources involved more funding, and a range of ways to manage this including use of the Royal Society of New Zealand. Enhancing capability included resources such as a code of best practice.

⁹ Several of these happened.



8.10 _ Marsden Fund Evaluation (2004)

In 2004 the Centre for Work, Education and Business Ltd undertook an evaluation of the Marsden Fund in a report to MORST. The focus, however, was almost entirely on issues affecting the physical and biological sciences, which are the main areas of activity of the Marsden Fund research assessment panels.

As a general comment it suggested (p4) that in relation to research “it is impossible to accurately predict what applications are most likely to produce positive outcomes in advance”.

This could perhaps be regarded as supporting the Marsden Fund Social Sciences panel policy of focusing its funding on high quality research rather than the social policy issues of most concern to ministries and government agencies.

8.11 _ The Scott, Duignan and Faulkner Report (2010)

The 2010 report ‘Improving the Quality and Value of Policy Advice (Review of Expenditure on Policy Advice)’ was focussed mainly on other areas, but did have implications for social research. Its terms of reference arose out of a confidence and supply agreement between the National and ACT political parties.

The covering letter of the report noted that “in the six years to 2009/10 policy related appropriations increased by more than 70%” (from \$508 million to \$888 million). Of the latter figure, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade spent \$323.9 million. In this company, public social research spending was once again a minnow among whales.

The report proposed seeking an ‘efficiency dividend’ by reducing spending across the board in policy areas and recycling the savings into cross-agency policy challenges. The report also advocated the organisation of portfolio and agency policy functions into clusters, and investment in capability and infrastructure in areas related to policy. This latter recommendation picked up a theme from the Hawke Committee 15 years earlier.

Summary of the social research reviews

Each of the reviews listed above came from a somewhat different perspective, but certain themes come through as persistent issues for most of the reviews. These are:

- the diversity of the social science sector and the difficulties crossing institutional or discipline boundaries
- difficulties and conflicts over how to set social research priorities
- the limited funding in the area compared with the big budgets for the physical and biological sciences
- repeated proposals to set up a dedicated social research organisation or grant funding agency focussing on the social problems facing public sector agencies.

However, most of the recommendations of the various committees were not accepted by governments of the day, and most decisions affecting social science research organisations and their funding were made for other reasons.

Most of the recommendations of the various committees were not accepted by governments of the day, and most decisions affecting social science research organisations and their funding were made for other reasons

9 Impact of the physical science sector on social research

Long before any of the current statutory social research providers emerged, New Zealand had a well-developed pattern of government involvement and at least part funding of the physical and biological sciences. This involvement was heavily orientated towards research which supported productivity improvements in the primary and manufacturing sectors of the economy. In some of these areas industries and individual enterprises were required to make financial contributions towards contracted research.

The Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (1926-1990)

In 1926 following the Heath report, “An Act to make Provision for the Promotion and Organisation of Scientific Research and for its application to the Primary and Secondary industries of New Zealand” was passed (1951-52 Yearbook p1066). This led to the development of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) which absorbed many of the former publicly funded individual research associations. The DSIR was to dominate research and research policy in New Zealand for two generations. In 1951, according to the 1951-52 Yearbook (p1066-1074), DSIR already had 17 divisions covering a wide range of physical and biological sciences, but only one small area (the Occupational Psychology Research Section) which had anything to do with social research. In its day, DSIR was one of the major departments of state in New Zealand, which provided a large knowledge input into the primary and secondary sectors of the economy.

The relationship between the scientific establishment in the physical and biological sciences and social science research went through four phases and, by the 21st century, a new status quo had emerged.

Phase 1: Benign neglect – initial spill-over effects

The background of what had been achieved in the physical and biological sciences often had impacts on how social research subsequently developed. Some of these factors were favourable including the spill-over of scientific method and quantitative data analysis into the social science disciplines. Also important was the fact that the success of the physical and biological sciences in boosting productivity helped create a climate where social research was also seen as offering potential benefits.

Phase 2: Active encouragement

Following a recommendation from the National Development Conference, the National Research Advisory Council finally began to think about the social sciences as a group. As the Couchman Report notes, in 1976 a social scientist was appointed to the Council, and in 1977 the Social Sciences Committee was established to advise the council on the social sciences. By 1981 the Social Sciences Research Advisory Committee and Fund had come into existence, housed in DSW, and through the 1980s a series of policy review were generally supportive of the social sciences. DSIR also had its own small internal social science research group.





Phase 3: Conflict in the 1990s

In 1990, a massive shift occurred in government science policy. DSIR was abolished and its former operational divisions were regrouped into commercial or semi commercial Crown Research Institutes. Two central agencies remained:

1. The Ministry of Research, Science and Technology (MORST) which was to be the Government Advisor on Science and Technology
2. The Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) which administered public good research funds.

As part of its perceived new role, MORST began to seek a wider role in setting policy for the social research sectors. This did not go well. The major problems were:

- The perceived distancing of social research grant funding from policy needs resulting from the transfer of the Social Science Advisory Fund into the new FRST in 1990. This created disappointment and discontent among the social sector departments and Stats NZ. The background to this is set out in the extracts from the O’Loughlin Report above.
- The collapse in 1995 of the newly set up (1992) Institute for Social Research and Development sponsored by MORST. This had been established as a fee charging Crown Research Institute covering a broad social sector definition. This was at variance with earlier recommendations from an officials group which had proposed a grant-funded entity.

The MORST financial model assumed that there were paying government department or commercial customers with spare funds who were eager to contract work out to the Institute. The reality was a shortage of funding in the sector. The setting up of the Institute on the financial basis chosen was one of the strangest developments of this period, and dented the credibility of MORST in the eyes of the social sector departments when the Institute subsequently failed to meet its financial targets and was wound up. More detail is given in the section on the Institute in the multi-sector organisations section of this report.

- Differences of view developed between MORST and social sector government departments over who should determine long term research priorities (and control funding) within departmental portfolios. MORST lost the battle. As late as 1996, MORST asked Colin O’Loughlin to report on the interface between operational research and long term public good research. MORST saw the latter as its responsibility. However, by this time it was a rear guard action in a lost war.

Phase 4: A new status quo

At the beginning of the 21st century the new status quo had stabilised, still accompanied by low level dissatisfaction about the role of FRST by some of government departments. By this time, however, additional research funding for MSD and Stats NZ had turned the focus elsewhere.

In 2011, MORST and FRST were abolished and their functions transferred to the short-lived Ministry of Science and Innovation. In 2012, this new entity was also abolished and the residual functions of science policy and oversight of scientific spending transferred to the new Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment. Actual management of public good-type research was transferred to the Marsden Fund under contract with MBIE. The Marsden Fund grant criteria include social science but do not require applied social research for government departments.

A recent new initiative has been the appointment of science advisors to some government social sector departments.

10 Structural issues in social research organisations

The appropriate structure to be used in locating public sector social research for a particular government portfolio involves three main options:

1. research and evaluation units located within the social sector ministry, department or delivery agency
2. separate public entities outside the departmental structure such as NZCER
3. outsourcing research and evaluation projects to external providers in the academic, voluntary or private sectors.

The balance between these options needs careful consideration.

Internal research units are the most closely connected to policy and can focus on the information requirements of the entity itself and of the government of the day. However, they are also the most constrained by the pressure of the immediate

- Internal research units are the most closely connected to policy and can focus on the information requirements of the entity itself and of the government of the day. However, they are also the most constrained by the pressure of the immediate and the political acceptability of certain areas of research. From the point of view of the wider research-interested community, they are to varying degrees subject to a culture of control where sensitive information can tend to be closely held because of political sensitivities.
- Separate public research units outside the day-to-day control of departments and their ministers can concentrate more on medium and long term issues, and are less constrained by political considerations. This is helped if they have a separate legal independence under an empowering Act. They are less immediately connected to policy, and depend on both the quality of their findings and their relationships with policy and service delivery agencies to be fully effective. They also need good political antennae to avoid being embroiled in political controversy.
- Outsourcing to private and academic providers can provide expertise not found within the sponsoring department, and in some cases can provide quicker or more cost effective research. However, the sponsoring department also needs to retain some professional research capability in order to effectively manage and assess the findings of outsourced research.

There is also a fourth approach outside the portfolio approach which consists of providing grants for researcher-derived proposals in broadly defined research areas. This is an approach favoured by academics who generate most of these proposals. This approach often gives researchers the greatest degree of independence from current policy constraints and can lead to distant 'blue sky' matters being considered, which can lead to advances in theoretical knowledge.

Whatever its long term benefits, however, feedback from social sector departments is that this approach, in the absence of any overriding prioritisation of areas of research, can lead to a focus on topics which are far removed from the policy needs of the day. The ongoing differences between departmental researchers and the Marsden Fund illustrate this type of problem.



Size and location of research organisations

The necessary size of a research organisation depends on the size of its intended field of operations and its degree of involvement. The past focus on the need for a critical mass size to support individual researchers has become somewhat modified by the growth in modern communications technology including the internet. To a degree smallness in size can be partly offset for individual researchers by development of networks of researchers nationally and internationally. At the same time the volume of funding and other resourcing still needs to be adequate for the task to be carried out.

However, size does matter in terms of ability to attract and retain career orientated researchers. Hence, if funding possibilities significantly restrict what is possible, some of the staffing problems can be overcome by location decisions.

- Locating a research unit inside a government department means that the researchers also have career options in the policy, management and operations areas of the department. If they wish to remain as researchers the wider public service also offers career and promotion options in other research units. As all the departmental head offices are located in Wellington, this option is geographically feasible.
- A second option is seconding public service researchers to small independent research units. However, the secondment approach usually only works well for short term assignments, often for particular projects.
- A third option is locating small research units inside one of the universities. This allows for combined research and teaching career options and some redeployment between universities, though the latter is affected by geographic dispersion of the individual universities. It tends to be an attractive option for high flyer 'blue sky' researchers who wish to be published internationally.

Cross-sector research

A difficult area for institutional design relates to the need for cross-sector research on issues which span a range of social sector institutional boundaries and may involve a range of different academic disciplines. The silo effect of different departmental boundaries was aggravated by the state sector reforms of the 1980s with their strong emphasis on defined departmental outputs. In addition, the individual academic disciplines involved tend to go their own separate ways. Historically there have been few incentives for cross sector research.

More recently the pendulum has swung back in the other direction with more focus on co-working and a whole-of-government perspective, including the Integrated Data Infrastructure project, and the analysis undertaken by the Social Investment Agency.

The empirical conclusion is that cross-sector research usually works best when there are a limited number of parties involved with an interest in the issue to be researched, and the issue being addressed is very clearly identified. Examples include the joint Ministry of Justice/MSD study of young offenders.

Cross-sector research usually works best when there are a limited number of parties involved with an interest in the issue to be researched, and the issue being addressed is very clearly identified

Policies which restrict access to public data tend to undermine the ways cross-sector research can be used

However, what does work well across departmental and academic discipline boundaries is the provision of information which has multiple uses. Examples include Census information, Labour Force and Employment Surveys, and the Household Expenditure and Income Surveys developed by Stats NZ. The Dunedin and Christchurch child development studies funded by HRC are in a similar category.

The implications of this are that much public sector social information is a public good which should be easily available to researchers. Policies which restrict access to public data (such as imposing significant charges for data access) tend to undermine the ways cross-sector research can be used.

Data correlation

The most recent set of initiatives in the information field involve linking administrative data collected by government departments to develop a fuller profile of individuals and households with high social service intervention needs. This is Stats NZ's Integrated Data Infrastructure, as mentioned earlier in this report. Further progress is expected to be facilitated by two developments:

1. the massive improvement in computer-linked data analysis capabilities of recent years
2. proposed designing of departmental information recording systems in a way which facilitates data matching.

The most recent development in these areas has been the establishment of the Social Investment Agency which seeks to match existing departmental records, as already noted in this report. In turn, this has facilitated a social investment approach where social sector resources can be better targeted to the individuals and households where they are most needed and cost effective.

In one sense, the focus on analysing administrative data is a return to the approaches of a century ago. The big jump is in data matching and analysis capability

In one sense, the focus on analysing administrative data is a return to the approaches of a century ago. There has always been significant research value in administrative data bases. The big jump is in data matching and analysis capability. Nevertheless, it can be expected that the findings that data matching throws up will in turn lead to the need to find out what lies behind the data, and what interventions will actually work to resolve identified problems. In this sense, data matching is simply one of the newer inputs into social research which ironically is also a return to one of the earliest forms of social research in government departments.

As of early 2018, these data matching initiatives and their institutional form can be described as 'work in progress'.





11 Institutional sustainability for social research agencies

A survey of the history of the public social research institutions listed in this report indicate that there are some common success factors which were associated with long term institutional continuance. There are also some factors which led to the institutions being abolished or absorbed into other entities, which was beyond the control of even the best performing research agency.

Institutional success factors

Factors which explain why some social research institutions succeeded are common to successful organisations generally: competent professional staff and good management. More specific factors are:

- a clearly defined field of research
- well identified research priorities
- a stable, long term funding model
- effective relations with policy and delivery agencies

Factors which explain why some social research institutions succeeded are common to successful professional organisations generally. These factors include competent professional staff and good management. However, this is not new information. More specific factors which are associated with long term success of social research agencies in the New Zealand public sector are:

1. A clearly defined field of research

Being focussed on a clear field of research or activity shows up as being associated with long term institutional survival. In practice in New Zealand, this means focusing on a single sector, though in theory other types of research field definitions are possible. Two types of institution demonstrated this single sector pattern:

1. the research units incorporated in major government agencies delivering social services, or at least those which survive public sector restructuring. The portfolio they are in determines their fields of research
2. the New Zealand Council for Educational Research and the Health Research Council. These two organisations have so far lasted 84 and 78 years respectively.

Conversely, the New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development lacked a clear field of activity. It lasted from 1992 to 1995, though funding issues were its biggest problem.

2. Well identified research priorities

Closely related to the first factor is the need to produce research which meets the needs of its clients, either the government directly or the public sector agency commissioning the research or providing the grants. To a degree, this alignment tends to happen nearly automatically in the research units within government departments, as they respond to the requirements of ministers. It also flows from direct contracts for particular research topics. However, the independent block-grant funded agencies, such as those in education and health, need to remain aware of policy and needs shifts if they are to stay in the game. So far, both areas seem to have exercised good judgement in choosing research topics.



The transformation of the Families Commission to Superu led to a situation where Superu, despite its efforts, was assessed by the government of the day as not having met government research and information priorities.

3. A stable long term funding model, at least for base line funding

Having a stable and appropriate long term funding model is important to publicly owned social research organisations. In the case of research units in government departments, fiscal allocations come as part of funding for the institution. For independent agencies, funding involves some form of block grant for at least base line funding to recognise the role they performed in providing information and advice to the government.

HRC funding is all grant money. For NZCER, a block grant provides part of its funding with the balance provided from research contracts gained and other business activities.

The attempt to set up the Institute for Social Research and Development as a fully commercial Crown Research Institute without any grant funding led on to its rapid collapse.

For public sector agencies outside the departmental structure, stable long term funding usually means some form of long term budget grant for at least part of the funding needed. However, the NZCER was funded for its first 10 years by block grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Because the Government is the principal user of social research, it needs to find the funding needed through grants, contracts or some other system. To this extent, the funding model applicable to social research institutions differs from that applicable to private sector research institutes or to the Crown Research Institutes, which have fee-paying clients in the private sector.

Funding available for most forms of social research outside of departmental boundaries has always been limited, with the exception of the health sector. Until recently, social research has had little attraction for private organisations, except in the economics area.

Besides, if the government is the real client, the Government needs to fund the research by one means or another.

4. Effective relations with the departmental policy and social service delivery agencies

Effective relationships with government departments and agencies delivering services or advising on policy is also important, particularly if they are paying the bills for the research or lobbying ministers on behalf of the research entity.

'Effective' does not always mean 'harmonious', however, even when the research unit is within the department concerned. 'Effectiveness' can have several meanings. Policy effectiveness involves being close to the policy action and being able to provide useful information, even if its value is only recognised retrospectively.



Effective relationships involve being able to access departments' administrative records for research purposes. Ongoing contact with front line staff is also important because it keeps the researchers current with what really happens at the sharp end.

When there is a good relationship with a sector department, and the institution is seen as providing valuable research information, the department tends to act as an advocate for the institution.

Failures in independent advisory bodies and research institutions

Several factors relate to institutions being either abolished or else merged into other entities. These factors are different for government department research units and independent advisory bodies or research institutions.

In a sense, the multi-sector environment makes for a high risk situation, while advice and funding issues administer the coup de grace to the organisation.

Three factors characterise the low life expectancy of some independent research entities and advisory bodies:

Three factors characterise the low life expectancy of some independent research entities and advisory bodies:

- attempting to cover too many different areas of social research
 - not providing the type of information and advice wanted by the government of the day, or providing information or advice at odds with their policy direction
 - lack of an adequate long term base funding arrangement
-

1. Attempting to cover too many different areas of social research

Operating in a multi-sector social research and evaluation environment is difficult in New Zealand, especially as the research units are small by international standards:

- if spread across too many areas, researchers simply lack the depth of expertise of single sector researchers and cannot compete in terms of research quality
- the spread also makes it difficult to build in-depth relationships with key social sector ministries
- multiple areas of responsibility make it difficult to determine real research priorities and the lack of expected results disappoints multiple stakeholders
- it takes years to build up a reputation for competence, and New Zealand governments seldom exhibit the needed degree of patience
- evaluating the activities of other organisations without their prior invitation risks antagonising these organisations.

2. Not providing the type of information and advice wanted by the government of the day, or providing information or advice at odds with their policy direction

A second problem which can lead to difficulties for research organisations is not providing the information which the government of the day wants, or even providing what it does not want. This seems to be a bigger problem for quasi-independent entities such as the former Planning Council, which was axed in 1991. In 2017, Superu was told that it was not providing the sort of information that the Government wanted and its resources were to be transferred elsewhere.

Research agencies inside key government ministries and departments have somewhat more latitude to deliver free and frank advice based on research findings than do advisory committees. However, even within mainstream departments, problems can arise. The termination of the Social Policy Journal was not unrelated to the fact that a research study it published indicated that a public statement by a minister was inaccurate.

A by-product of this issue is that some topics are off-limits to government research agencies and others are subject to a culture of control about what is publicly released. Conversely, the independent agencies have more freedom to research and publish, but are also more likely to be axed if they do not meet the needs of the government of the day.

Even if the social research organisation avoids controversial topics, it can be judged to be a failure if it does not produce the type of information the government and its departments want.

3. Lack of an adequate long term base funding arrangement

Finally, lack of secured long term funding. This led to the rapid demise of the New Zealand Institute for Social Research and Development.

Failures in government department research units

The only identified cause found for government department social research units being abolished are changes in the desired organisation of the public sector.

The entities affected are all outside the core social sector entities running the public health, public education, social security and justice services. Apart from this, however, there appears to be no other reason why some of these entities vanish and others survive or grow. Unfortunately for the entities concerned, these changes have nothing to do with how well the research entity performs, and cannot be seen in advance.

In the case of government departments which lost their separate identities, the underlying research function as distinct from the former research entity usually re-emerges in a new structure.

Some major such changes included:

- periodic swings between setting up small functional agencies and large super ministries with many functions, such as MBIE
- funder/provider splits, such as those favoured from the mid-1980s through to the 1990s
- new central government functions being set up, such as ACC or special arrangements made for the 2011 Christchurch earthquake recovery
- major departments being abolished, such as the Department of Works, DSIR and Department of Labour.



The Department of Labour was once one of the major administrative entities in the public sector and, at one stage in the 1970s (Couchman report p9) had the largest research staff of any administrative department outside of the physical and biological science. Admittedly, this was then a field of minnows in relation to staffing in the physical and biological sciences.

The Department of Labour successively lost its employment survey tasks to Stats NZ, then lost the employment service to a new Department of Work and Income, and finally got merged into MBIE. With these changes, the original research entity lost out.

The risk of a public sector social research organisation being abolished is least in the core social service departments which operate in justice, public education, public health and social security

It should be noted that the risk of a public sector social research organisation being abolished is:

- least in the core social service departments which operate in justice, public education, public health and social security. These organisations have so far survived even when peripheral functions are added to or subtracted from their parent departments
- moderate in the less core departments where restructures into new forms or even departmental abolition are more common
- highest in advisory bodies or institutions outside the main public service where institutional survival rates are low, notably if they are operating in a multi-sector research environment.



Appendix 1

Bibliography

Boston, Jonathan, Dalziel, Paul, and St John, Susan	Redesigning the Welfare State in New Zealand Oxford University Press 1999
Cartwright, Judge Silvia (Chairperson)	The Report of the Committee Appointed to review the Social Sciences Research Fund Committee May 1987
Centre for Research, Work, Education, and Business Ltd	Report of the Evaluation of the Impact of the Marsden Fund. December 2004
Couchman, Paul R	Policy Making for the Social Sciences in Government Departments (DSIR 1984)
Hawke, Gary (Convener)	Drawing on the Evidence – Social Science Research and Government Policy. A Report to the Government through the Minister of Research, Science and Technology (1995)
Health Research and Analytic services	New Avenues for Crown Funded Social Science Research. Report to the Chief Scientist of MORST. November 1994
Hill, Dr. Roberta	Social Sciences (MORST 1997)
Martin, John E	Holding the Balance. A History of New Zealand's Department of Labour 1891-1995. Canterbury University Press 1996
McLure, Margaret	A Civilised Community. A History of Social Security in New Zealand. Auckland University Press 1998
NZ Institute for Social Research and Development	Annual and 6-monthly reports 1992-94
NZ Productivity Commission	More Effective Social Services. October 2014
OECD	The Welfare State in Crisis. OECD Paris 1981
O'Loughlin, Colin	A review of the management of the interface with, and the boundaries between departmental operational research and research funded by the PGSF New Zealand. MORST 1996
Preston, David A	Retirement Income in New Zealand, the Historical Context. Office of the Retirement Commissioner 1999
Scott, Graham Duignan, Pat and Faulkner, Patricia	Improving the Quality and Value of Policy Advice (Review of Expenditure on Policy Advice 2010) Report to the Ministers of Finance, State Services, and Regulatory Reform
Social Science Reference Group	Connection, Resources, Capacities. How social science can better inform social policy advice. July 2001
Social Science Research Fund Committee (SSRFC)	Establishing areas of Priority for research in NZ. SSRFC 1981
Stats NZ	New Zealand Official Yearbooks 1935-1990
Working Party on Operational Social Policy Research	Social Policy Research for Government. MORST 1990



Appendix 2

Annual reports consulted (various years)

Accident Compensation Corporation

Department of Labour

Health Research Council

Ministry and Department of Education

Ministry and Department of Health

Ministry and Department of Justice

Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Social Policy, and Department of Social Welfare



Appendix 3

Websites consulted

Accident Compensation Corporation
Brookings Institution
Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL)
Encyclopedia of New Zealand
Health Research Council
Housing New Zealand Corporation
Hui E
Law Commission
Marsden Fund
Massey University
Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE)
Ministry of Education
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Justice
Ministry for Pacific Peoples
Ministry of Social Development
Ministry for Women
Motu Research and Education Foundation
National Library of New Zealand
New Zealand Government
New Zealand Institute of Economic Research
Parliamentary Library
Social Investment Agency
Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (SUPERU)
Stats NZ
Te Puni Kōkiri
The Morgan Foundation
The Treasury
University of Canterbury
University of Otago
Wikipedia



Appendix 4

List of people consulted

Basher, Eileen	Manager, Research, Evaluation and Analytics Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Boston, Jonathan	Professor of Public Policy, Victoria University of Wellington
Biles, Megan	Senior Evaluation Analyst, Policy Strategy and Evaluation Group, Health Research Council of New Zealand
Bunt, Lorna	Acting General Manager, Insights, Ministry of Social Development
Clendon, Dr Jill	Chief Nursing Officer, Ministry of Health
Cook, Len	Chairman, Families Commission Board. Former Chief Executive of Stats NZ
Crothers, Charles	Professor of Social Science and Public Policy, Auckland University of Technology
Du Plessis, Daniel	Senior Analyst, Evaluation, Ministry for Pacific Peoples
Fraser, Anaru	Hui E. Formerly Federation of Voluntary Welfare Agencies
Galvin, Vincent	Chief Methodologist, Stats NZ
Gill, Derek	Principal Economist, Head of Public Good, New Zealand Institute of Economic Research
Gluckman, Sir Peter	Government Chief Science Advisor Member of Families Commission Board
Grimes, Arthur	Senior Fellow, Motu Research and Education Foundation
Gush, Jason	Programme Manager, Insight and Evaluation, Royal Society of New Zealand
Hawke, Gary	Honorary Fellow, Victoria University of Wellington Former Professor of Economic History, Victoria University of Wellington
Hill, Yelena	Manager, Organizational Knowledge, Te Puni Kōkiri.
Howden-Chapman, Philippa	Professor of Public Health, University of Otago
Karacaoglu, Girol	Head of School of Government, Victoria University of Wellington. Former Chief Economist, Treasury
Kennedy, Antony	Manager Research and Evaluation, Corporate Governance and Information, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Krishnan, Vasantha	General Manager, Evidence and Investment, Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children
Koopman-Boyden, Dame Peggy	Emeritus Professor in Social Gerontology, University of Waikato



Mackay, Ross	Principal Advisor, Ministry of Social Development
Mason, Emily	General Manager, Engagement, Social Investment Agency
McGlinchy, Trevor	Executive Director, New Zealand Council for Christian Social Service
McQueen, Helen	Commissioner, Law Commission
Menzies, Malcolm	Chief Executive, Families Commission/Superu
Pande, Madhukar Mel	Senior Research Advisor, Accident Compensation Corporation
Peace, Robin	Associate Professor, Research and Evaluation, Massey University
Perry, Bryan	Principal Advisor, Ministry of Social Development
Pittams, Grant	Manager, Health and Disability Intelligence Group, Ministry of Health
Prosser, Lauren	Manager, Research and Evaluation, Accident Compensation Corporation
Ramsay, Shona	Senior Manager, Tertiary Sector Performance Analysis, Ministry of Education
Rean, Jacqueline	Senior Advisor, Evaluation and Research, Housing New Zealand Corporation
Retter, Margaret	Director Policy, Ministry for Women
Robinson, Lee	Director, Science System Investments and Performance, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Sillars, Helen	Manager, Special investment, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
Slyuzberg, Michael	Principal Advisor, Ministry of Justice
Smith, Conal	Consultant, Social Investment Agency
Spoonley, Paul	Distinguished Professor and Vice Chancellor, College of Humanities and Social Science, Massey University. Chair of Marsden Fund Social Science Panel
Stagg, Mark	Director, Research Funding, Royal Society of New Zealand
Stevens, Philip	Group Manager, Evidence, Data and Knowledge, Ministry of Education
Toppin-Casserly, Lola	Manager, Research and Evaluation, Insights, Ministry of Social Development
Visser, Heleen	General Manager, Research and Development, New Zealand Council for Educational Research
Ward, Clare	Former Chief Executive, Families Commission/Superu
Warren, Ken	Chief Accounting Advisor, The Treasury
Wilkinson, Jo-Anne	Deputy Chair, Families Commission Board
Wylie, Cathy	Chief Researcher, New Zealand Council for Educational Research

