The purpose of the digest is to provide a quick and easily accessible reference point to items of interest in the social policy and social work field. Generally, it will not provide commentary on those items, but will confine itself to being a summary description. It will cover areas such as reports that have been released (and where they can be obtained from), new legislation and/or regulations of interest, changes in social services provision and organisational arrangements, pending conferences etc. Material is drawn from the media, from solicited references and from sources received directly. If you have something you think would be of interest, send it to me at the Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Massey University Albany, Private Bag 102-904, North Shore MSC.

Mike O’Brien, Digest Editor for Editorial Board.

April 18   Conference calls for child sex abuse to be treated as a public health issue.
April 18   Government launches Treaty education website.
April 26   Some local authorities to introduce a scheme whereby elderly people struggling to pay rates will be able to have a stay on their rates until after death and then debited to estate.
April 27   University “Students Association reports that student loan debt reaches $7 billion.
April 28   Ministry of Social Development announces plan for funding of surgery for sickness beneficiaries to aid return to work.
May 11     Prime Minister says that section 59 of the Crimes Act will not be reviewed until after the three year education programme is completed.
May 11     Sixteen year old locked up in police cells for 10 days because no suitable residential facility available.
May 12     Doctors warn of whooping cough epidemic in 2004.
May 16     Psychiatrists conference told that people with schizophrenia are 4.5 times more likely than the rest of the population to have been convicted of a violent crime.
May 17     Ministry of Justice report finds that people under the age of 20 are drinking larger amounts of alcohol since the legal drinking age was reduced.
May 18     Treasury report argues that there are less operations in public hospitals over last six months of financial year compared with previous year despite increased funding.
May 19     Paula Taylor appointed as new ZEO for Child Youth and Family announced.
May 25     Suicide prevention fund and drug related health initiatives announced.
May 27     Budget extends range of income support programmes, including extensions to accommodation supplement, childcare subsidies and Family Support and
introduction of in work payment. Changes will be staggered over the next three years. Changes too to special benefit regulations will affect beneficiaries. Emphasis is on supporting those in work. Additional finding for mental health and primary health and additional state houses.

May 31  Best practice guidelines for restorative justice released

May 4   New Zealand asthma rate triple world average.

May 5   Hikoi to oppose foreshore and seabed legislation arrives at Parliament.

May 7   Statistics identify high birth rate (compared with other countries) for New Zealand women under 20 and for those over 30.

June 1  Civil court fees to rise, increasing costs for property disputes, environment court and some District Court and High court actions. Adoption charges to be abolished.

June 2  2400 more state houses to be built in Auckland

June 2  Auckland university study reports emphasises value of positive thinking as contribution to reducing suicide rate among adolescents

June 2  Otago university study funded to work on programme to reduce obesity in three experimental communities

June 3  Deutsche Bank economist warns of effect of rapidly increasing household debt

June 8  Sex abuse treatment programme for young offenders (under the age of 12) begins in Waikato

June 8  ACC reports $27 million in fraud by claimants and health providers over last year

June 8  Youth justice package announced to improve youth justice residential services

June 10  Budget introduces extended family assistance for families in work with children

June 13  EEO unit finds little progress in employment equity in all four target areas – women, disabled people, Maori and Pacific peoples

June 22  New Zealand Sign Language Bill introduce, making sign language and official language

June 25  NZCER study finds that children who receive high quality early childhood education increase gap between themselves and their peers in adolescence

June 29  Auckland city rates increase falls most heavily on poorest households

June 29  Select Committee considering Care of Children bill recommends that Family court be made more open. Children’s Commissioner argues that needs of children must be paramount

July 3   Victoria University research finds that step-families are no different to married couples in commitment to relationship
July 10  Audit of health treatment finds that city residents three times more likely to get specialist treatment than those resident in country areas

July 10  Power increases likely to have effect on larger families and sick

July 14  Department of Child Youth and Family Services reports increase of more than 10,000 cases in last year to 43,414 reports

July 15  Department of Child Youth and Family Services to pay $7000 incentive to new graduates in social work

July 17  Otago university research finds that watching too much television (>2 hours daily) increase later risk of heart disease and other health problems

July 24  Centre for Housing Research finds that 1/3 of tenants in Auckland are paying more than 40% of income in rent

July 24  Prime Minister apologies to Te Uri O Hau for Crown breaches of Treaty of Waitangi

July 25  Canterbury University research shows that 80% of murdered children were not known to Department of Child Youth and Family Services

July 25  New Zealand Institute reports policy paper highlights impact of growing debt on New Zealand society

July 26  Northland social services report increased cases of families living in cars because of shortage of emergency housing

July 26  Plunket hotline to join national health information hotline

July 27  Emergency Departments at hospitals offering vouchers for patients to go to private care

July 28  MSD figures report growing numbers of those receiving sickness and invalids benefit as a result of stress and depression

July 30  Government pays average of $47,000 compensation to former Lake Alice hospital patients for abuse

July 31  Prime Minister opens Odyssey Family Centre facility for families with substance abuse and gambling difficulties

July 31  Secondary School Principals Association research finds increasing numbers of adolescents taking medication to manage stress of NCEA demands

August 3  Housing affordability index finds sharp decline in housing affordability

August 3  Massey University research finds increasing number of liquor outlets not checking for age of those purchasing alcohol