

# Editorial

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*Third Sector Review* was born at a time of social change. New Public Management reforms continued that year (and since) with privatisations of public-sector entities (such as Qantas in 1995), and a continued squeeze on third sector social service providers through government contracting (McDonald & Crane 1995). This was evident from the very first issue of the journal, which included Rose Melville's (1995: 69) analysis of women's refuges – their survival prospects were strongly correlated to the 'degree of institutional support evident in the wider political and policy context'. Truer words could not have been spoken 21 years later, as the journal 'comes of age'.

While third sector research was a relatively new field of endeavour in Australasia in 1995, third sector organisations are part of the history of both New Zealand and Australia, with colonisation bringing charities, sports and social clubs to add to societies already developed by the indigenous peoples in both countries (e.g. Tennant 2004). Margaret Harris (1995) threw down the gauntlet in that first issue, exhorting *Third Sector Review* to expand its boundaries in order to examine the breadth of the third sector, to critique and develop public policy issues and to undertake international comparisons and cooperative research.

*Third Sector Review* has been fortunate to have had a number of editors who have taken on these challenges. Jenny Onyx was the editor from 1995 to 2001 (aided by Catherine McDonald for some issues). Following a number of specific issues, some of which were edited by Wendy Earles, Rosemary Leonard headed the editorial team from 2006. Ruth Phillips joined Rosemary from 2012, and they jointly undertook the task until early 2015.

Special issues have long been a feature of *Third Sector Review*, allowing guest editors to bring in some of that sector breadth. The first special issue was edited by Mark Lyons ('Researching the Third Sector:

International and Australian Perspectives’) and focused specifically on Margaret Harris’ challenge to undertake international comparisons.<sup>1</sup> Others have focused on ‘Doing Third Sector Research’ (edited by Wendy Earles, Kevin Brown and Susan Kenny), and yet others on specific segments of the sector – expanding those boundaries. These have included ‘Charity Law’ (edited by Myles McGregor-Lowndes), ‘Sport and the Third Sector’ (edited by Russell Hoye) and ‘The Third Sector and Communication’ (edited by Roumen Dimitrov). Typically we have also published a special issue following the biennial conference.

The topics considered in *Third Sector Review* over its 21 years have been broad. Of the 278 papers (not counting editorials), 21% have considered management topics such as communication, human resources, leadership and governance. A further 14% have analysed legal, regulatory, accounting or accountability issues. In addition, 15% of the research has specifically discussed social service organisations, with a further 11% critiquing sustainability, social enterprises or microfinance issues. Volunteering has been a topic discussed often, but specific papers on this topic account for around 8% of the publications, and a further 6% on issues such as history, disaster responses and grassroots organisations. The balance (25%) have reported on government relations, social justice and/or other concepts – the public policy issues that Margaret Harris (1995) also urged us to consider.

In the first issue, Julie Nyland (1995) spoke of feminism theory and third sector research ‘passing like ships in the night’. Third sector research is sometimes criticised for a lack of theoretical engagement – although over the past 21 years, the editors have been sensitive to the need for *Third Sector Review* to balance practice and theory. In addition, different methodological approaches have been encouraged, from quantitative through to qualitative, positivist through interpretive to critical. Such encouragement includes the three Early Career Researcher prizes awarded at the 2012 and 2014 ANZTSR Conferences to Courtney Webber (2013), Marion Cornish (2013) and Craig Furneaux (2014).

While the topics discussed in *Third Sector Review* are broad, the papers are mainly contributed by academics (80%), with only 7% from practitioners and just over 7% jointly authored by practitioners and

academics. The remainder are an innovation: papers 'From the Field'. These are shorter and often written by practitioners (or jointly with academics), and usually comment on matters of practice. With joint papers contributing about 35% of all the papers, more than 250 authors have written for *Third Sector Review*;<sup>2</sup> of these, around 55% have been female and 45% male. Although there is an Australian bias to authorship (and some of this could be attributed to the development of specific third sector research centres in Australian universities), 13% have come from New Zealand. The remaining 11% of authors have been from overseas. We are beginning to respond to the challenge for international work, although there is more space to publish work from our Asia-Pacific neighbours and colleagues.

To mark *Third Sector Review*'s coming of age, this special issue celebrates the journal's achievements, featuring reflections and updates of some of our best published papers. Of particular note, immediate past editors Rosemary Leonard and Ruth Phillips review the journal's output since 1995. Their analysis gives us pause for thought. They acknowledge the need for disciplinary studies (as with Buckmaster 1995, in our first issue) but also challenge us to engage with different disciplines. Third sector studies, they note, 'are not only multi-disciplinary but can also be interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary'. This is the excitement of third sector research: collaborations with others beyond our own disciplines. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work is also more likely to enable us to deal with the complexity of the third sector, to explain it in more meaningful ways and to advance knowledge and understanding.

Jenny Onyx, who as well as being *Third Sector Review*'s founding editor was also the guest editor of 'Third Sector as Voice' (2001) and the special issue from the ANZTSR Conference in 2003 (volume 9, number 1),<sup>3</sup> provides us with some reflections on volunteering. Volunteering is critical to the continuance of the third sector, developing social capital and therefore communities (see, for example, Leonard & Onyx 2007). Jenny comments on the need for support for volunteering in New Zealand and Australia, in order to develop the necessary 'person-to-person connections', through flexible opportunities. This allows

community development in stable times, but also following disasters, such as earthquakes and bushfires.

Myles McGregor-Lowndes was the guest editor of the special issue on charity law in 2002, and *Third Sector Review* has published a number of other papers considering legal matters in the third sector. For example, 21 years ago Catherine McDonald and Phil Crane (1995) critiqued consumer rights regulations and how third sector organisations were operationalising these requirements. In this issue, Myles examines developments in Australian charity law. As he notes, much has changed since 2001, both in regulatory terms and in scholarship. We look forward to the ‘smarter regulation’ that he predicts!

The changing relationships between the government and third sector are a constant concern for third sector practitioners and researchers, and Jo Baulderstone has authored a number of papers in this area (Baulderstone & Earles 2009; Earles & Baulderstone 2012). She was guest editor of the special issue emanating from the 2006 conference, and also contributed to the special issue celebrating the journal’s twelfth birthday. She notes that ‘while there have been significant changes in the landscape . . . many issues remain the same’. It is unfortunate that we observe ‘friction and tension’ rather than collaboration towards a better society.

While Jo comments on the Australian situation, Garth Nowland-Foreman updates his 1997 paper on government funding models in New Zealand. He asks: are third sector organisations ‘crushed or just bruised’? Garth has been deputy chair of ANZTSR for many years, and was guest editor of the special issue emanating from the 2014 conference. His analysis covers two political periods (the New Zealand MMP arrangements headed by Labour in the early 21st century, and now the National government). He notes with surprise that ‘despite promise and continuing rhetoric . . . the “contract culture” persisted, albeit [under Labour] in less militant form’. He also reminds us (as does Jenny Onyx) that the third sector is so much more than government contracting, and indeed contributes hugely to community cohesion and social capital, being a ‘carrier of hope’.

New methods of being and doing are signalling a way forward for organisations that might feel stifled under government contracting. Jo Barraket is the author of one of our most downloaded papers (Barraket & Collyer 2010), as well as others on social enterprise and community development (Barraket 2003; Barraket & Archer 2010). She also contributed to the 2001 special issue ‘Third Sector as Voice’ (Barraket 2001). In this issue, Jo updates her 2010 paper by commenting on the state of social enterprise in Australia, and is optimistic about the future for both research and practice, as creativity and ingenuity is applied to some of the more intractable problems of our society.

For this special issue we asked authors for their personal views, rather than for new research or literature reviews. We believe that their contributions have been both thoughtful and helpful for us to consider, as we look forward to many more years of third sector scholarship.

*Ma te whakaatu, ka mohio*

*Ma te mohio, ka marama*

*Ma te marama, ka matau*

*Ma te matau, ka ora.*<sup>4</sup>

## NOTES

1. Sadly, Mark Lyons died in 2009; Wendy Earles published his obituary in volume 16, number 1 (2010).
2. Although the number of authors published in *Third Sector Review* by a simple count total 320, some individuals have authored or co-authored multiple papers.
3. Jenny also contributed her reflections after fifteen years of the journal (Onyx 2011).
4. A Māori proverb that, translated, means: ‘By discussion comes understanding, by understanding comes light, by light comes wisdom, by wisdom comes wellbeing.’

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