

## Vice-Chancellors Report to Council December 1997 (Vol 6)

### 2. REVIEW OF SOCIAL WORK PROGRAMMES

A review of Social Work Programmes was undertaken by a panel convened by Professor Paul Morris and including, among its members, a senior social work educator and Professor Ranganui Walker, Professor of Maori Studies and Assistant Vice-Chancellor responsible for Maori and Treaty Policies at Auckland University.

Although the full report of the Review is not yet available, the recommendations became available to me while I was in Kuala Lumpur in November. The Review panel had proposed to present these recommendations to staff of the current department at the end of their week in the University, but after discussions with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Equity/HR) and Professor Morris, it was agreed that he and I should schedule a meeting with staff on my return. This duly occurred on 19 November and the recommendations are now under consideration by the Dean and staff of the department with a range of responses now received.

The principal recommendations are that the current department be disestablished and be replaced by a new Department of Social Work and a Kaupapa Maori Social Work located in the School of Maori Studies. Existing Social Work staff would be transferred to the department and unit respectively. Staff concerned with other programmes within the current department of Applied Social Studies would be transferred to other appropriate departments within the University. The current professor would be moved to a research professorship, with the establishment of a Center for the Study of Social Work being seen as a possible outcome. New Social Work programmes reflecting the

distinction between a core social work professional training to be secured through a Bachelor's degree and a continuing undergraduate diploma focussed on Maori social work issues are recommended. A series of detailed recommendations about transitional arrangements and the longer term organization of the teaching and research programmes are also included. (97/181B)

I have advised the Dean, Professor Morris and staff that I find the recommendations initially credible because they explain a persistent conflict in the feedback which has been received about our social work programmes. On the one hand there have been strong expressions of appreciation for the achievement of the programmes in making university education accessible on a bi-cultural basis to a range of students, particularly in the Rotorua area. The very successful graduation ceremony organized at the senior Arawa marae earlier this year was notable for this. On the other hand there have been persistent expressions of concern from agencies and from some staff about delivery of the course and the professional skill levels of students undertaking the professional placement sections. The review panel clearly received a great weight of evidence on both of these points as well as others and appear to me to have made well considered recommendations. Professor Morris may wish to comment further.

The Executive Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences, who has shared some of the concerns expressed about the programme for some time is now making arrangements for a senior academic to be appointed to assist with the rather complex transitional arrangements, in conjunction with a senior member of the Social Work staff yet to be identified. I have indicated that in my view the current professor should undertake a period of leave prior to any decisions being made about the establishment of a Center and that consideration of the Review's recommendation that a new professorial appointment be made as early as possible in 1998 should take place once the transitional arrangements are confirmed. Neither the Dean nor I believe that an appointment early in 1998 is feasible in any event, in view of the delays implicit in the international search which the Review panel recommends.

Before taking part in the presentation of the recommendations to staff, I ensured that the Dean and Professor Morris had checked with the Professor of Maori Studies to confirm that the School would be willing to accept the proposed Kaupapa Maori unit. Professor Te Awekotuku confirmed that such a development would be thoroughly consistent with the department's own developing policy and that the staff members in question would be welcomed.

I would not normally brief Council concerning the results of a Review prior to receipt of the written report, but the recommendations in this case are sufficiently important and sensitive that I ask Council to note this interim report which will be followed up in a more formal manner in 1998.

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### Review of Social Work Programmes

- 3 that the review has resulted in some fairly radical recommendations. The covering memorandum outlines the action taken so far. The reaction to the review from staff in Social Work and other affected areas has, on the whole, been quite favourable, with a degree of relief that some of the problems are being addressed;
- 4 that the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences has asked Professor Chris Dearden to see through some of the transitional arrangements which are arising;
- 5 that the Vice-Chancellor is not willing at this stage to support the establishment of a Centre for the Study of Social Work; this is consistent with the review report which only asked that the suggestion be considered.



## Council Meeting December 1998

(Taken with the Public Excluded)

### 245.98 FUTURE PROGRAMMES IN SOCIAL WORK

**Received:** the memorandum dated 30 November 1998 from the Vice-Chancellor (document VUWC 98/151).

**Reported:** by the Vice-Chancellor:

- 1 that following the report of the Review of the Department of Applied Social Sciences, the Vice-Chancellor requested that a sub-committee of the Academic Board be established to advise him on whether there should be an intake of students in 1999 into the current social work programmes and to advise on the implementation of any or all of the recommendations of the Review of Social Work. The resolutions of the Academic Board sub-committee are subject to negotiation with the AUS and affected staff;
- 2 that the recommendation that it is no longer appropriate for diploma programmes in social work to be offered at Victoria University is based on the fact that the diploma is competently taught in the polytechnics and that it is more appropriate for this to be taught at the polytechnic level.

Students currently enrolled in the diploma programme will be able to complete their qualifications but there will be no new intake into undergraduate programmes in social work as from 1999;

- 3 that the majority of the current staff in social work do not have the academic qualifications to allow them to supervise students at the postgraduate level. Information received from the Health Funding Authority indicates that academic programmes leading to higher level qualifications in social work are not a priority for them. For this reason, Victoria University will also cease to offer postgraduate programmes in social work once the current cohort of Masters students have completed their programme. The demand for postgraduate students studying Masters qualifications does not justify the maintenance of a small number of staff to supervise those students;
- 4 that the Vice-Chancellor takes exception to comments which have appeared in the media to the effect that non-Maori students enrolled in social work programmes have been humiliated. Written depositions have been received from students who have completed these courses, challenging those comments. Depositions are also available, challenging the comments concerning sub-standard teaching. These depositions will be made public;
- 5 that the recommendations to cease teaching social work programmes are based on the fact that the nature of undergraduate teaching is not appropriate for this University and that the courses are no longer consistent with the aims and aspirations of the University. There will be continuing discussions with the AUS representing staff on this matter; there have not yet been discussions with the staff likely to be affected by these recommendations.

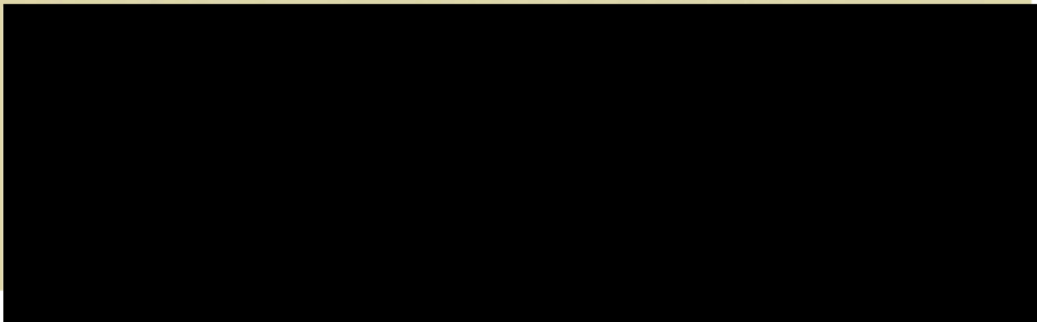
## REPORT OF THE REVIEW OF SOCIAL WORK

Noted: that the Vice-Chancellor read the following statement to the Council on the Review of the Department of Applied Social Sciences:

It is with considerable regret that I bring these recommendations to this meeting of the University Council. The process of the review has been protracted because of administrative difficulties, obfuscation and misinformation. I have initiated process to ensure that administrative difficulties with future reviews do not occur.

Members of Council will have been petitioned about inaccuracies in the review process. These recommendations acknowledge that there were two minor errors (relating to student evaluations and ethics committee process). However, as part of the consultative process following the review I received written submissions and I participated in several interviews which convinced me that the review reasonably reported major academic and administrative problems with the Department of Applied Social Sciences.

In finalising this review I have been particularly concerned that the bad publicity during and subsequent to the review unfairly reflected on the performance of some staff and bring to the attention of Council these unfortunate results of the review.





Statutes for the disestablishment of departments require the Dean of the Faculty to discuss with Faculty and Academic Board his or her recommendations for the disestablishment of a department. Council members will note from the transcripts of those discussions that the recommendations of the Dean were resoundingly endorsed by both Boards. Council will also note that there was some reservation expressed at Faculty Board about continuing any Social Work programmes.

In finalising my recommendations to this meeting of Council, there are a number of matters that I wish to bring to the attention of Council.

- 1 I do not endorse the recommendations of the Dean that four academic staff be initially appointed to a new course with a potential enrolment of only 20 EFTS in the Year 2000. I have, however, recommended that one of the three new positions be allocated to a Maori, perhaps as a 'junior lecturer' as recommended in the draft strategic plan.
- 2 I have recommended that all existing positions be disestablished effective 31 December 1999. This will enable existing teaching arrangements to be fulfilled and to allow suitable notice, where appropriate, of redundancies. AUS have indicated opposition to this recommendation, proposing instead transfer of existing staff to new positions. Such a proposal presupposes exact match of skill base for new positions and could be seen to influence the establishment of new position descriptions.
- 3 Quality assurance procedures in the University should have ensured that many of the problems in the operation of the School of Applied Social Sciences should not have occurred. The Dean and the Faculty Board have been directed to address these issues and to report to the Academic Board and Vice-Chancellor. Appointment procedures have already been altered so that academic staff without a PhD cannot be appointed without the permission of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

An unresolved problem is the delivery of health education to iwi from the Maori perspective. In recent discussions that I have had with representatives of iwi trust boards in the central North Island and Bay of Plenty, I have undertaken to continue consultation about the delivery of indigenous health programmes to iwi in these regions. I will report back to Council on these matters.

The Vice-Chancellor is specifically seeking the approval of Council for the disestablishment of the Department of Applied Social Sciences.

**Reported:** by the Chancellor:

That members of Council are reminded that the situation with respect to the Department of Applied Social Sciences is one that the Vice-Chancellor inherited on his appointment as the review report was released immediately prior to his appointment. This is one of the most difficult issues the Vice-Chancellor has had to deal with in his time here and Professor Irving has faced up to and made the hard decisions behind the recommendations now before Council.

**Noted:** 1 that although the Vice-Chancellor advised that there will be no change in the day to day arrangements for existing Social Work students, the student members expressed the concern of Social Work students that they are not being kept informed of what is happening with respect to this process.



Because of the confidential nature of the discussions that Council has had on this matter, the student members have been limited in the information that can be passed on to Social Work students. A request was made for a meeting with the current Social Work students to inform them directly of the recommendations of the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive. The Vice-Chancellor agreed that, once Council has made its decision on this matter, a meeting will be convened with all currently enrolled students to assure them that the University will be honouring its arrangement to assist them in completing their degree;

- 2 the concern that the discontinuation of the current Diploma in Social Work will leave a gap in terms of social work training for Maori. The recommendations following the review are based on a pakeha academic perspective, whereas the department has been attempting to do things from the Maori perspective. The University does have obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi and it would be comforting to think that the University is doing its best to fill the gap in social work training for Maori;
- 3 that all of the iwi the Vice-Chancellor has had discussions with, with one exception, have expressed concerns at the credibility of the Diploma in Social Work programme and the way it was being run. We have offered in the interim to transfer the ownership of that programme to be run by the polytechnics in the regions where Maori are located. It is agreed that the undergraduate programme is equivalent in standard to a polytechnic qualification and that that is the appropriate level for it. There do, however, remain concerns as to how this University will position itself in terms of the delivery of indigenous health programmes to iwi in these regions; the Vice-Chancellor has agreed to continue consultation on this matter and to report back to Council in due course;
- 4 that the Diploma in Social Work has been represented as a graduate qualification but at the moment it is clearly an undergraduate diploma qualification. There is no doubt that it has been represented in the wider Maori community as a graduate programme which enables students to immediately enrol in the Masters programme. The way the diploma programme was delivered was not consistent with appropriate academic standards in this University and some of the staff were not qualified at a level which should be required at any university in this country;
- 5 the concern as to what lies behind the publicity surrounding this matter and who is funding and distributing the material that members of Council have received. If staff are involved in that and using University resources to run a campaign against the line being taken, there must be some issue of professional behaviour involved and some disciplinary action which can be taken. In response to this concern, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the campaign was funded by University resources approved by the school, which is one of the reasons for the recommendation that the school be disestablished immediately and that staff report to the Dean of the Faculty



of Humanities and Social Sciences. These actions will be the subject of disciplinary action to ensure that this does not happen again;

- 6 that it is important that a statement be made to staff along the lines that it is recognised that at least some of them have been affected by this matter in ways that were not their responsibility;
- 7 that this has been a contentious and fractious issue to deal with and it has been difficult for the Vice-Chancellor to reach a compromise between both ends of the spectrum, i.e. the good things which have come out of this course and the obvious criticism of the course. The recommendations that have been made are a good compromise. In terms of iwi support it would be desirable to see support which assists iwi to get off the ground in terms of delivering these courses. It would also be nice to see assistance given to staff, particularly Maori staff, who are not qualified to teach the Masters programme to help them become qualified and to regain some of the credibility and mana they thought they had;
- 8 by the Vice-Chancellor that there will be discussions with Maori staff regarding their aspirations in terms of further degree study. Discussions have also begun on whether it is possible to deploy staff into other departments in the University; this has already been done with one staff member. There will be regular reports to Council on how these issues are being dealt with, particularly the deployment of staff;
- 9 that the Academic Board looked at the current undergraduate social work programmes offered in New Zealand and the enrolment in these programmes. The advice from the Board is that it would not be favourable for Victoria University to set up its own undergraduate programme in this area at this stage. There is also the view that establishing our own undergraduate programme would still not meet the needs of a number of Maori in the programme, i.e. mature age women with minimal educational qualifications but extensive life experience still living in other areas;
- 10 that further to the recommendation that one of the three new positions be allocated to a Maori, the concern was expressed that we are endeavouring to appoint a certain category of person to that position and that this could be seen as appointing a "token" person for a "token" reason. Competency for the position should be the first criteria when employing staff. The Vice-Chancellor noted that one of the reasons for this recommendation is that it is unlikely that the programme would have the credibility of offering degree programmes with a Maori perspective if no Maori academic staff were involved in the teaching of it. We believe that there will be suitable Maori candidates for that position, although appropriate academic qualifications will still be a requirement for appointment to that position. In addition to these three positions, the department may create an additional position for a junior Maori staff member who wishes to complete their qualifications;

- 11 that the Vice-Chancellor is to be commended for the way he has handled this matter. It is gratifying to note that a mark has been set which states there are certain standards to be met and this particular programme did not meet them. The difficulties with this particular programme go back a long way and the review was an essential step towards solving them.

**Resolved:** that Council approved the following recommendations:

- 1 that the Department of Applied Social Sciences be disestablished, effective 31 March 1999;
- 2 that the undergraduate Diploma in Social Work be disestablished, effective 31 March 1999;
- 3 that the University will continue to offer graduate education in Social Work;
- 4 that the University will honour commitments to existing students to enable them to complete their degrees;
- 5 that all existing positions in the Department of Applied Social Sciences will be disestablished effective 31 December 1999;
- 6 that the Board of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences will bring recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor by 31 May 1999 on procedures which confirm that the administration of all courses in the faculty are regularly assessed to ensure that they conform to agreed accreditation documents and to University policies and procedures.

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**Noted:** that members of Council are asked to keep this matter confidential until such time as the Vice-Chancellor writes to each staff member in the department, notifying them of the situation and the support services available to them.