



THE POLICY OBSERVATORY

March 2019 NEWSLETTER

WELCOME

Welcome to the March newsletter for The Policy Observatory. We introduce a new paper on local government, look ahead to the launch of our new podcast *The Policy Fix*, and profile the latest Briefing Papers.

You may have received an email from us in January with news of the death of Emeritus Professor Ian Shirley, who was the founder of The Policy Observatory. We would like to thank the people who shared their memories and sent kind wishes to us and to Ian's family. Ngā mihi nui.

NEW PAPER BY DAVID SHAND

2019 is a big year for local government with elections in October and a Productivity Commission inquiry into local government funding and financing due to report back in November. Local Government New Zealand and the New Zealand Initiative are also running a campaign on 'localism', calling for the decentralisation of decision making. In this context, David Shand, former Chair of the 2007 Rates Inquiry and member of the 2008-9 Royal Commission on Auckland Governance, has written a short paper on two current topics: centralisation; and the purpose of local government (the core services versus well-being debate). Shand points out the one area where local government has high levels of autonomy – financial policies and budget decisions – and he argues this autonomy should be protected.

You can read David Shand's paper here:

<https://thepolicyobservatory.aut.ac.nz/publications/local-government-role-and-autonomy-some-additional-perspectives>

PODCASTS

The Policy Observatory is about to launch our new podcast. The Policy Fix is a series of 15-20 minute interviews with policy experts on the problems that face us as a country and their ideas for solutions.

Our first four episodes are on the theme of inequality:

- **Peter Skilling**, Senior Lecturer in Management, AUT
 - On his recent Marsden-funded research into what New Zealanders think about inequality and the prospects for reducing it.
- **Max Rashbrooke**, Senior Associate at the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, VUW
 - On the state of economic inequality in Aotearoa today and a concise run through of his policy recommendations for fixing the problem.
- **Tracey McIntosh**, Professor of Indigenous Studies, University of Auckland
 - On inequality in the criminal justice system, the social inequalities that lead to it, and the sweeping changes we need to make as a country.
- **Shiloh Groot**, Senior Lecturer in Social Psychology, University of Auckland
 - on homelessness in Aotearoa, the attitudinal problems towards homelessness New Zealanders need to fix, and the broad policy approach necessary to really help.

Look out for The Policy Fix on [our website](#), iTunes, Soundcloud, Stitcher and other podcast directories in the coming weeks!

HELEN CLARK FOUNDATION

The Helen Clark Foundation, an independent policy think tank with charitable trust status, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Auckland University of Technology. AUT is providing the Foundation office space and some administrative support while it is becoming established, and the Foundation will connect with University staff and students in its work. This aligns with the University's commitment to research for the public good, and public communication of research. The Policy Observatory is providing the Foundation with support and collegiality during this time. The website is here: <https://www.helenclark.foundation/>

The formal launch of the Foundation will take place at AUT on March 21st. People interested in next generation energy issues, the subject of the Foundation's first report, can contact the Director about a seminar on April 3rd: director@helenclark.foundation

BRIEFING PAPERS

The [Briefing Papers website](#) hosts new papers most weeks. You can subscribe to new posts using an RSS feed, or have them sent to your mailbox. Latest papers include:

A day at Waitangi, and at the beach. By Keri Mills

What is Waitangi Day? Is it a day of protest, a day of celebration, a day of commemoration or a day at the beach? In this Briefing Paper Keri Mills argues that Waitangi Day is many, even slightly contradictory things, and maybe that's okay.

<http://briefingpapers.co.nz/a-day-at-waitangi-and-at-the-beach/>

The future of Archives New Zealand and the National Library of New Zealand. By Don Gilling

This is a companion piece and update to [Don's Briefing Paper from 2018](#) in which he examined the accounts for the Department of Internal Affairs to determine whether efficiencies of scale – a promise made by the advocates of the merger of Archives New Zealand, the National Library and the Department of Internal Affairs in 2010 – have eventuated. In this update, Don untangles some more financial details which confirm budget cuts to core services, and he provides updates on the review process.

<http://briefingpapers.co.nz/the-future-of-archives-new-zealand-and-the-national-library-of-new-zealand/>

In light of the recent debate on whether New Zealand history should be compulsory in schools, readers might like to revisit these Briefing Papers from late last year:

The New Zealand Wars and the School Curriculum. By Joanna Kidman and Vincent O'Malley

Joanna Kidman and Vincent O'Malley argue that content, not just skills need to be taught: that a basic knowledge of the history of one's own country is essential if young people are to engage in and understand their own communities.

<http://briefingpapers.co.nz/the-new-zealand-wars-and-the-school-curriculum/>

The cost of choice in the New Zealand History curriculum. By Rachel Rafferty

There are no compulsory topics in the New Zealand history curriculum; teachers have to cover certain skills and ideas, but not particular events. The theory behind teachers having full choice over what topics they teach is that it allows them to select topics they think will engage their students. This also allows teachers to avoid difficult subjects, as Rachel Rafferty explains.

<http://briefingpapers.co.nz/the-costs-of-choice-in-the-new-zealand-history-curriculum/>

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