

Incompetence and Neglect

Reports released this month alone have shown the entire state education edifice — primary, secondary and tertiary — to be suffering from major incompetence and neglect.

One review was called for by the Government in February after embarrassing problems such as the funding and governance at Te Wananga o Aotearoa and the NCEA results bungles. It was carried out by the heads of the State Services Commission, the Treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. (Sounds pretty serious if all of those heavies were involved.) The scathing review of the education sector's bureaucracy was released on 18 July and revealed lack of leadership and capability among education agencies, poor advice and an inability to carry out government policy. The Ministry of Education (MoE), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA) — which together administer senior secondary school qualifications and policies related to tertiary education — failed to work together, had an inward focus and suffered a lack of leadership.¹

In regards to tertiary, the TEC was said to not be able to recognise poor courses nor even stop funding irrelevant courses.¹ Dubious polytech courses milked taxpayers of tens of millions of dollars.² But once the report forced Minister of Education Trevor Mallard to admit that both students' and parents' confidence in the sector had been shaken, he was able overnight to close the category of funding exploited by some polytechs as well as put a cap on student numbers in courses below degree

level.

“Communities want to know that they are getting good value for money, and at the moment I think it's fair to say they can't have that degree of confidence,” Mr Mallard said.²

Well, no, they can't. Especially after revelations that some of the money has been spent on courses including twilight golf, Maori sing-a-long sessions and dog grooming. Between 2000 and

2004 the number of students studying fulltime toward a degree increased by just 6 per cent — compared with a 546 per cent explosion in the number of adult and community education students.² National Party Candidate for Palmerston North Malcolm Plimmer says that education expenditure increased from \$1.8 billion in 1999 to \$3.1 billion in 2004, and that the number enrolled in the Eastern Institute's Sing-a-long course was more than the total nationwide signed up to do modern apprenticeships.³ Such things have inflicted huge political damage on the Government.

There is not a lot new about tertiary students being ripped off, except perhaps that the Polytechs are into the scam big time. In February last year, Karl de Fresne's column in the

The Parties' Home Education Policies

On June 24 this Editor wrote the following four questions to each of the parties in Parliament and a couple of smaller ones. Neither the Labour Party nor the Greens have deigned to answer as yet 28 July). The various answers of seven parties follow:

1. Does your Party recognise Article 26(3) of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, which says: “Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children”?
2. Does your Party's policy include the enhancement of educational choice in NZ by promoting home education to the general public?
3. Does your Party's policy include the enhancement of educational choice in NZ by streamlining and simplifying the exemption process to let

more parents embark on the home education option?

4. Does your Party's policy include a review and strengthening of the state's role in setting and enforcing educational standards among all education providers, including home educators?

From Deborah Coddington of ACT:

ACT supports ending the Ministry of Education's monopoly on directing education resources. Our education policy is all about maximising local choice for parents in the type of schooling they want for their children, whether state schooling, private schooling, or home schooling. The important thing is standards. Labour has dismantled the nationwide testing to hide its failures in education. ACT stands for



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Manawatu Evening Standard wrote:

*The tertiary education system has become hopelessly skewed. The labour market is swamped by people with utterly useless BA degrees but desperately short of skilled tradespeople....Over the years they have stealthily promoted an insidious process known as credentials creep, whereby more and more jobs are placed out of reach of those without formal tertiary training. In doing so, they have created a mindset that the only job worth having is one that requires a paper qualification....In my own profession [journalism], credentials creep has a particularly bizarre effect....The inevitable result is that some journalism courses end up being taught not by journalists but by academics with only the haziest understanding of the real world. The courses are hopelessly skewed toward the theoretical and the graduates emerge spectacularly ill-informed....Some tertiary institutions' promotional information blatantly preys on the naivety of prospective students and, in my view, borders on the fraudulent.*⁴

Another part of Mr Mallard's overnight "fixes" is an extra \$46 million over four years that will be redi-

rected to courses improving adult literacy and numeracy.² Now, again, it is nearly unbelievable that the Ministry of "Education" is still in business if it finds it needs to fork out \$46 million to try to fix a literacy problem in adults after it had failed to make them functionally literate after at least 10 years of compulsory schooling. No, this is not money to improve adult literacy among immigrants: see for yourself on the website of the Minister for Social Development, Steve Maharey, that an astonishing 46% of adult NZers are functionally illiterate: <http://tinyurl.com/462ow>.

One wonders how anyone can seriously study and learn with the kind of stuff students in the state pris..., that is, the state schools have to endure. Right here in sleepy old Palmerston North, police staged a surprise raid on three classrooms full of year 10, 11 & 12 students, complete with at least six uniformed officers, spearheaded by Sergeant Peter Knight and Senior Constable Alan Campbell and a sniffer dog, on Thursday 26 May 2005. The paper failed to identify the school, but it did say the students were stunned

as they had to leave everything in the room, including cell phones lest they text a warning to the next class. The one concession to dignity, and I suppose as a pleasant reminder that we have not yet fallen completely into a police state, was that the students were not body searched....and that was because the raid was done at the invitation of the school, not because there was any police evidence! Indeed, they found nothing after all that.⁵

But we can all rest assured: should we ever send any of our children to these institutions, they will be under suspicion at all times and will be treated at random like quasi-criminals.

And of course, where there's drugs, there's sex. Punishments for sexually-related misbehaviour have shot up. Ministry of Education figures show the number of such cases has risen by almost a third in two years, from 283 in 2002, to 371 at the end of the last school year. Ron Mulligan, the School Trustees Association's trusteeship adviser, said, "You want to help the student, but you also need to make sure the rest of the student population can be educated in a safe environment. It's a real balancing act....Good values need to be instilled in a school's culture. Schools have to look at ways to work with a student."⁶

But the Primary sector appears to be leading the Secondary in the drug stakes. Children as young as 10 are dealing in and smoking cannabis at school, and boards of trustees are being told to call police to deal with the growing playground drug culture.

Of this Ron Mulligan said the offenders were usually in years seven and eight and, though there were instances of dealing, more often it was a case of children "simply sharing it among themselves".⁶

Yes, going to school is a real education all right. You can be introduced to drugs on the playground, be sexually abused, dumbered down and treated to a sniffer dog raid because your prison warden....I mean, your principal, suspected your class of being part of a real "high" school.

Notes:

1. *Dominion Post*, 20 July 2005, Review canes education officials, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3350508a10,00.html>
2. *Dominion Post*, 19 July 2005, Axe for 'cash cow' courses, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3349497a10,00.html>
3. Letter to Editor, *Tribune*, 24 April 2005, p. 2.
4. *Evening Standard*, 4 February 2005, Credentials creep insidious, p. 6.
5. *Guardian*, 2 June 2005, Drugs will not be tolerated in schools, p. 3.
6. NZPA, 2 July 2005, Alarm at primary school cannabis dealing, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3332431a7694,00.html>

TEACH Bulletin

is a monthly publication of the Home Education Foundation and is concerned with those things which may impact on home educators. Articles will deal with political developments, statist and professional trends, correspondence with educationalists and other items of general interest to home educators. Information herein is not to be construed as legal advice. Opinions expressed in TEACH Bulletin are those of the writer and should not be assumed to reflect those of the Home Education Foundation Trustees or Board of Reference Members. TEACH Bulletin is available for a subscription of \$16 per year for 11 issues (none in December) or two years for \$30.

All correspondence to:

The Editor, Craig S. Smith
PO Box 9064
Palmerston North
New Zealand
Ph.: (06) 357-4399
Fax: (06) 357-4389
mail@hef.org.nz

www.hef.org.nz

Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and reject not your mother's teaching.
— Proverbs 1:8

Trading Post



Wanted:

Pen Pal: Hi! My name is Tabitha. I am 10 years old and live on a farm. My hobbies are: all kinds of sports, drawing, and I love animals and farming and have a good sense of humour! Please write to:

Contact:

Tabitha Jenkins
Oromahoe Rd.
R.D. 2
Kaikohe
Bay of Islands

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high quality nationwide exams and maximum local choice in education provision.

It is acknowledged that getting there requires, among other things, review of the exemption process to simplify it and refocusing the state on standards, not directing resources.

Act believes the funding should follow the child in the form of a type of voucher or tax credit, and parents who educate their children at home should be entitled to the same value voucher as parents who send their children to a state, private, or community, or church school.



Peter Cresswell of the Libertarianz wrote: Libertarianz policy is to remove the compulsion requirement altogether for children attending schools and to give back the schools to the communities in which they currently sit. And you can bet we're cheerleaders for those who presently choose to remove their children from state hands and the hurdles put in your way in doing so.

Our view is that governments have no way of 'maintaining standards' and neither do we want them to; parents are responsible for their children, not bureaucrats and quangoes. We propose a complete separation of school and state, in the same way and for the same reasons as the separation of church and state.

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The Libz Education policy is here: www.libertarianz.org.nz/?policy=education. You may also find this blog post of mine useful: www.pc.blogspot.com/2005/04/education-policy-brash-has-still-got.html

Bill English of National wrote:

1. Yes.
2. I don't expect a National government will be promoting home education; that is ultimately a choice of parents.
3. I am happy to look at the exemption process to ensure that it is fair for parents. It is a significant decision for parents to decide to home school their children and I want to be sure they have considered it properly.
4. I believe that we should be stripping down the state's roll in setting and enforcing educational standards among education providers. Too much information is collected and it is not acted on.



Brian Donnelly of NZ First wrote:

1. New Zealand First recognises in general the sentiment behind Article 26(3) of the UN Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. We would not recognise the right of a parent to a kind of education which inculcated anti-social behaviours or sentiments, or which advocated criminality, etc.
2. Yes, although this is not specified in our manifesto, it is clear by our positions that we support the home-schooling option.
3. No. If anything we would make the process more vigorous to ensure the state was meeting its responsibilities to the child.
4. Yes.



Jim Anderton of the Progressive Party wrote:

Progressive policy on education gives priority to ensuring that we have a high quality public education system accessible to all at all levels regardless of parental circumstances. That includes opportunities for home education through such institutions as the Correspondence School when that is warranted by circumstances such as family isolation or the needs of the child.

We are also proponents of choice and diversity, and I am aware that some parents, for a range of reasons, wish to educate their children at home. I have no problems with that, provided standards of education are maintained in the interests of the children involved, and respect the commitment of parents in attending to their children's education in this way.

Bernie Ogilvy of United Future wrote:

I note below [in square brackets] some of our policy points which form the basis for our Homeschool Policy. Then, further down I answer your questions.



[United Future believes strongly in the right of a citizen to choose his or her child's education provider, and this includes the home. "Whatever delivery methods parents choose, we will honour and encourage."

This is based on a few key assumptions (not exhaustively listed here):

1. That children belong to the parents and not to the State.
2. The Education Act notionally supports that (s. 21).
3. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 26 (iii) states that "Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children." We fully support this basic human right even though successive NZ governments have not wholeheartedly

embraced that Article.

4. Good parents have been educated and can write, read and do arithmetic (and have an array of other skills and knowledge) and are consequently capable of passing on family, community, and societal truths to their kids. As long as there is an assurance that good learning and wisdom is being imparted. ERO is presently doing this.
5. All good parents have a built-in desire that character training be integrated into their child's life. In a good caring home there are few who are better suited to teach, show and model this! This fully ensures that the religious beliefs and worldviews of the parents can be passed on without conflicts and coercion.
6. Children are better balanced in life by not being "streamed" by their age!
7. We are NOT interested in financing providers (schools), but learning for every child.
8. United Future has its education policy grounded on the notion that wherever a child goes for its education, then the appropriate money goes with that child.
9. No parent who pays taxes should be expected to pay more than once for declared services, such as education! The State shall not discriminate, for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 26 (i) states that "everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory."]

Answers to Your Questions:

1. Answered positively in our policies - above.
2. Yes. Our Education policies states specifically that homeschooling is available to parents - and the funding that goes to the child is on a par with others being educated outside the home. We deal with this as an injustice, and an incentive for parents to move away from work to home!
3. Our policy is to review s. 21, to look at issues surrounding professional assessment, etc.
4. Our policy is to offer alternative education providers, as the

"one-size-fits-all" emphasis of this centralised power structure of the Ministry of Education has failed. More options, including Homeschooling, is on our agenda.

And finally, someone passed to



me the home education policy of Destiny NZ. I found this to be exactly as it appears on the Destiny NZ website:

Home Schooling

Positional Statements

1. Education begins with dad and mum in the home and therefore supports the concept of parents as first teachers
2. Parents have the right to educate their children within their own home environment supported by reasonable funding
3. Parents have the responsibility to uphold standards equivalent to registered schools in the core subjects of numeracy and literacy

Policy Statements

Destiny New Zealand will:

1. Review the current annual rates for home schooling grants, with a view to increasing the annual amount to an adequate level
2. Assist / resource parents with access to educational resources that support study at home

Points for Lobbying MPs

Writing and sending a letter by post or fax:

This is the ideal method of communication if you want to get their attention. It requires a response from them or their secretary. When an MP receives many letters like this, it creates a more powerful impression than email letters.

Form letters that are not addressed properly are not recommended (i.e., a letter that looks like it has been photocopied with a space at the top for you to insert the MP's

name.) Your letter by fax or through the post needs to be personal and if possible in your own words. Lots of letters saying the same things "word for word" do not have quite the same impact. It doesn't have to be an epistle. A letter short and to the point is recommended. A handwritten letter will often attract more attention (as long as it is tidy) than a typewritten one because it takes the author more effort to write.

Email

These are best if it is in your own words. However if someone else has written something very well, and you repeat those words, it does have some merit. Sometimes sheer volume speaks. Larry Baldock MP recently mentioned he received 1500 submissions by email from recreational fishermen concerned about the depletion of Kahawai fish stock. It definitely got his attention, even though the emails were all worded pretty much the same. Now that is called passion and concern, and it was translated into action.

In all communication, please remain civil. Definitely use no threats or be abusive. It is helpful to mention your area of expertise if it is applicable or to quote some respected authority if you can.

MPs watch the polls so they are interested in their popularity. In a sense we are their bosses, so to simply register you don't agree with them has an impact even if you don't write much.

If possible start off with a positive comment like, "I like what you said recently about..." or "I appreciate all the hard work you do as an MP." Or "Thank you for not voting for the Bill on..." If you voted for this MP or his party last time, do mention that fact.

Cotton Wool Poor Armor

United Future issues more press releases than anyone else. A couple that really were good on 20 and 21 July dealt with the red tape tying schools up by OSH (Occupational Safety and Health) so much they couldn't organise a school camp in the school grounds! Apparently schools have to fill out a Health and

Safety form when taking students to the movies or the public library. Leaving aside the fact that it surely must be totally redundant for expensive schooling institutions to organise trips to the movies or the library, the person writing this lamented what a waste it was of energy that could have been spent in “taking our kids out to experience the real world!” So why do people insist on taking their children OUT of the real world for six hours a day, five days a week, nine months a year?

It appears there is a real drive to surround children with cotton wool and protect them from too much reality. The NCEA does this by describing a failing grade at assessment time as “not yet achieved”. The Reuters news service reported last week how the members of the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) in the UK want to cease using the word “fail” in the classroom for it might put children off learning. They would favour seeing the phrase “deferred success” used instead.¹

But the idea of protection by bringing them all together, partly to protect them from us parents as well, is fatally flawed. The Hong Kong B flu was actually blamed for the deaths of three North Island children recently before it went south and wrecked havoc on schools there. The flu’s explosive spread was facilitated by herding those most vulnerable together into classrooms rather than relying on the natural quarantine effect of people simply staying home. Hillview Christian School principal Alan Harrison said 123 of his school’s 400 pupils were away with the flu at one point. He said it was the highest number of people off sick with the virus in one day he could recall in his 30 years of teaching. Mr Harrison had actually considered shutting the school down in order to stem the spread of the virus...but he felt that would be too inconvenient for the large number of working parents.²

And Waikato schools, obviously not alone in being infested, but alone in willing to speak out, are struggling with lice. Parents at Frankton School say their children have been continually re-infested for 18 months. Principal Judy Dixon said

the school did have a system to deal with the problem: students who had head lice were sent home until their hair was treated³...so they could come back to get re-infested and catch flu at the same time!

Notes:

1. Reuters, 20 July 2005, UK teaching group to consider banning word “fail”, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3351604a7694,00.html>
2. *The Press*, 5 July 2005, Hong Kong B flu hits Christchurch schools, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3334876a11,00.html>
3. *Waikato Times*, 13 July 2005, Waikato schools struggle with lice problem, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3344270a7694,00.html>

TV a No-Brainer

Young children who watched more than 2½ hours of television each weekday had lower chances of reaching university than other children, irrespective of their intelligence or social background, Otago University researchers have found.

Published in the latest issue of *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, the study was based on research into a group of 1037 people born in Dunedin in 1972 and 1973. On weekdays, subjects watched 2.06 hours on average between the ages of five and 11, and 3.13 hours between 13 and 15.

“Children of all levels of intelligence did worse if they watched television,” Dunedin Research Unit deputy director Dr Bob Hancox said. According to Dr Hancox, qualifications determined one’s employment opportunities, social standing and health. Therefore the television-watching habits of New Zealanders were a serious concern. Today, children probably watched more television than the study sample, who were children growing up in the 1970s and 1980s.

Boys watched slightly more television than girls. When weekends and holidays were taken into ac-

count, children spent more time in front of the television than they did in the classroom, Hancox said. He did not allow his daughter to watch television during the week.¹

Earlier studies – some dating from the 1960s – link childhood television-watching with problems as diverse as poor school performance, aggression, bullying, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and even early puberty.

A year ago the same research team working with the same 1037 people born in Dunedin in 1972 and 1973, found children who watched too much television were more likely to be overweight, unfit smokers with high cholesterol when they grew up. This 2004 study attributed 17% of obesity, 15% of poor fitness, 15% of raised cholesterol and 17% of smoking at age 26 to children exceeding the two-hour daily TV-viewing limit recommended by the American Academy of Paediatrics.

Christchurch clinical psychologist Dr Fran Vertue, who specialises in child and family issues, says a blanket prohibition is probably not the best reaction. Instead, she advises parents to use common sense and monitor what their children watch. “You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to say that kids don’t have the ability to see the big picture,” she says. “They can’t project forward in time to understand cause and effect...Young children, in particular, will copy violence if it’s modelled.”

Some American Academy of Paediatrics TV Guidelines include:

*Limit children’s total screen time, including time watching TV and videotapes, playing video and computer games and surfing the internet.

*Check content ratings and parental advisories for all programmes and video games.

*Keep TV sets, video recorders, video games and computers out of children’s bedrooms and put them where you can be involved and monitor their use.²

Notes:

1. *The Press*, 5 July 2005, TV squares eyes, blunts brains, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3334874a10,00.html>
2. *The Press*, 14 July 2005, Tuning out for children’s sake, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3343468a1861,00.html>

Coming Events

The following items are not strictly home education events but meetings to explore the political ramifications of repealing Section 59 of the Crimes Act. Craig Smith, on behalf of FamilyIntegrity.org.nz, will explain how this could easily be used to shut down home education.

Tue, 2 August 2005

Radio Talk Back

Rhema's *The Forum* with Wayne Buchannan, 10pm to midnight.

The following talks by Craig Smith are all titled, "Very Worried Parents: Meet the State's Challenge to Your Authority"

Wed, 3 August 2005

South Auckland

7:30pm at Papakura Baptist Church, 44 Clevedon Rd., Papakura. Contact Christine at (09) 292-8454, email: whettons@clear.net.nz

Thur, 4 August 2005

East Auckland

7:30pm, Tara Room, All Saints Community Centre, Cook St., Howick. Contact Glenda Aiken, ph. (09) 570-9613, deaiken@xtra.co.nz

Fri, 5 August 2005

North Shore

7:30—9:00pm at Reformed Church, 74 Trias Rd., Glenfield. Contact: Berywn (09) 418-2460, email: berywn.hoyt@contact.net.nz

Career Guidance

These sites contain quizzes for personality typing, career suggestions and many useful links.

In New Zealand:

<http://tinyurl.com/dwnty>

<http://www.worksite.govt.nz/>

<http://www.kiwicareers.govt.nz/>

<http://tinyurl.com/73mfj>

Elsewhere:

<http://www.psytech.co.uk/>

<http://tinyurl.com/cv2f6>

www.careerkey.org/english

www.marksmen.co.il/public

www.shldirect.com

www.christiancarecenter.com/guidance

<http://tinyurl.com/8juav>

www.help.edu.my/careerguidance

www.appliedinsight.com

Sat, 6 August 2005

Whangarei

Home Educators Workshop

Venue: St Andrews Uniting Church, Cnr Bank and Hunt Sts, Whangarei.

Contact: Sharyne (09) 437-2725
sjfamily@maxnet.co.nz or
Siobhan ph (09) 437-2250.

Cost: \$15 single, \$25 couple, or
\$5 per session.

Programme

8:30-8:55am Registration and inspect resources for sale.

9:00-10:00am Keynote Address: Getting things into Perspective - Craig Smith

10:00-10:45am Morning Tea

10:50-12:05 Four Electives

A. Teaching the Reluctant Learner - Laughton King

B. Books, Great Books and More Books + the Vital Nature of Reading Aloud - Craig & Barbara Smith

C. Career Analysis and Planning - Ray Green

D. Keeping Going - Carol Munroe

12:05-1:05pm Lunch and Resource Viewing

1:10-2:10pm Four Electives

A. The Several Intelligences - Robyn Williams

B. Home Educating Through Secondary - Craig Smith

C. Starting Out in Home Education - Sharyne Jaunay

D. Music in the Home - Dale Nelson

2:15-2:45pm 5 Mini Workshops

A. Science - Kathy Derrick

B. Holistic History - Rose Tattersal and Karen Sawford

C. Temperaments - Robyn Williams

D. An Effective Approach to Early Literacy - Sarah Reynolds

E. CVs - Jannette Coleman

2:45-3:00pm Afternoon Tea

3:00-4:00pm Four Electives

A. Dad's Essential Role - Craig Smith

B. Training Our Children's Minds: the Tools of Learning and Motivation - Barbara Smith

C. Getting Crafty - Wendy Hamilton

D.ERO Reviews - Rob Williamson

4:05-4:35pm Question & Answer session with panel of experienced home educators.

Lower North Island Consultations with MoE

Jeanette Voyce and Peter Norton of the Lower Hutt Management Office of the Ministry of Education have organised the following itinerary to give home educators an opportunity to ask questions and hear the latest developments. All Home Educators are invited to attend. Meetings are arranged for the rest of NZ, but details are incomplete at present.

Mon, 15 August 2005

10am - Reformed Church, 541 Ruahine St., **Palmerston North**

2pm - Thompson House, 4 Kent St., **Levin**

Wed, 17 August 2005

10am - Dannevirke Services and Citizens Club, 1 Princess St., **Dannevirke**

2pm - REAP House, 340 Queen St., **Masterton**

Fri, 19 August 2005

1pm - GSE Level 4, Westfield Tower, 45 Knights Rd., **Lower Hutt**

Wed, 24 August 2005

9am - The Life Advance Community Centre, 150 Ngamotu Rd., **New Plymouth**

2pm - Wanganui East Baptist Church, cnr Nixon & Moana Sts, **Wanganui**

Thur, 25 August 2005

9am - Council Chambers, Hautapu St., **Taihape**

Mon, 29 August 2005

2pm - Johnsonville Community Centre, 3 Frankmoore Ave., **Johnsonville**

Tue 30 August 2005

10am - Kapiti C.C. Library, 179 Rimu Rd., **Paraparaumu**

2pm - Pataka Porirua Museum of Arts and Cultures, cnr Norrie & Parumoana Rds, **Porirua**

Wed 31 August 2005

2pm - "The Stables" Lane Park Hall, 16-22 Lane St., **Upper Hutt**