

## Editorial

Pakatō i te ata, pakatō i te ahiahi, mauri mahi i te ao, mauri ora ki te whenua

*Planning and preparation are critical to health and prosperity*

Koinei te mihi maioha ki a koe, otirā ki a koutou katoa ngā hoa o te ao aromatawai. Nau mai, haere mai ki tēnei tuhinga hou, *He Take Tō Te Aromatawai—Evaluation Matters*. Ko tā te whāinga o te pukapuka nei, kia whai wāhi ai ngā kaiaromatawai o Aotearoa ki te whakawhiti whakaaro e pā ana ki te ao Māori, te ao o te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa waihoki te ao hurihuri whānui tonu.

Warm greetings to you dear friends and welcome to the inaugural issue of *Evaluation Matters*, a reinvigoration of a New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) journal title, with the addition of our own special te reo Māori (Māori language) flavouring (thanks to our colleague Kirimatao Paipa).

The journey to this auspicious milestone began with discussions at the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA) Board. These early commitments to the idea of an evaluation journal were picked up by Board members who wrote a draft kaupapa (agenda) for the journal and liaised with NZCER to see what was possible. They had a journal that had been in recess for a time, and very kindly offered the title to us along with their support for the publication of

the journal. ANZEA members were surveyed, and these early commitments gained shape and momentum.

I was delighted to accept the position of Editor-in-Chief and to have an amazing editorial board of intelligent and experienced evaluators who were ready for action. Our community then rose to the challenge of sharing their knowledge through writing journal papers for submission. These papers, in turn, were peer reviewed within a very short timeframe so that we could launch the journal at the 2015 ANZEA Conference during EvalYear, the International Year of Evaluation.

Our guidelines for peer review expressed our primary expectation that reviewers would write mana-enhancing reviews—from the style and tone of their reviews, to them suggesting potential fixes to any issues they identified. The reviewers included those with a lot of peer-review experience, as well as first-timers who approached the task with a mix of trepidation and immense care. The result was peer reviews that were thought-provoking, engaging, and informative. The positive feedback from authors affirmed the value of the *koha* (gifts) offered by the peer reviewers. My conclusion: as a community we are our own best critical friends.

This journal volume contains five articles, along with Karen Kirkhart's thoughtful keynote address to the 2014 ANZEA Conference. As a whole the volume resonates with authors' meditations on evaluation practice here in our place, in Aotearoa New Zealand. What authors have to say "locally" also has international currency as their explorations of evaluations' nooks and crannies occupy many others in our profession. Their writing is also relevant for those interested in understanding the impact of initiatives, including: policy writers, philanthropic funders, government and non-government provider organisations, and communities.

Karen Kirkhart's keynote at last year's ANZEA Conference,

“Unpacking the Evaluator’s Toolbox: Observations on Evaluation, Privilege, Equity and Justice”, could have been especially written for this inaugural journal volume. Karen begins her keynote by connecting with her audience at a personal level, telling us something of where she grew up, the people in her life, how she came to be an evaluator, and her journey to Syracuse University. She then explains the importance of recognising and challenging (often unnamed) privilege as part of a commitment to social justice and equity. To illustrate this commitment, she unpackages her own privilege to remind us about the importance of reflexivity, while also adding that reflexivity does not replace action.

Two articles continue this theme of reflecting on the role of self as evaluator. In their article, “Cultural Fit: An Important Criterion for Effective Interventions and Evaluation Work”, Debbie Goodwin, Pale Sauni and Louise Were argue the case for a continuum of *cultural fit*. Cultural fit describes the importance of evaluators being ethnic “insiders” or matched culturally to an evaluand, so that they have more understanding of the cultural nuances of that evaluand. They also describe how cultural fit might also be an evaluative criteria for assessing an initiative’s “fit” with its intended audience or community.

Rae Torrie, Mark Dalgety, Robin Peace, Mathea Roorda and Robyn Bailey write about “Finding our Way: Cultural Competence and Pākehā Evaluators”. They describe the tool they have developed to enable them to reflect on how they can undertake culturally competent evaluation in Aotearoa, while remaining aware of the history of this country and the often-negative experiences that Māori and other non-Pākehā groups have had with Pākehā researchers and evaluators. In this way they are mindful of the past, and they allow it to shine a light on their way forward.

Vivienne Kennedy, Fiona Cram, Kirimatao Paipa, Kataraina Pipi, and Maria Baker also describe reflexivity (although not named by

them as such) when they write about their experience of a wānanga (forum for discussion and learning) with colleagues to talk about wairua (spirituality) in evaluation. Four of the seven principles arising from this wānanga are expanded upon in their article, “Wairua and Cultural Values in Evaluation”. As well as elucidating the thoughts of Māori evaluators, a goal of this article is to encourage other evaluators to think about spirituality in their own practice so that conversations can occur more broadly within our profession.

Maria Baker, Kataraina Pipi, and Terri Cassidy have also been reflecting on their evaluation practice within the context of the Whānau Ora (Māori family wellness) initiative. Their article, “Kaupapa Māori Action Research in a Whānau Ora Collective: An Exemplar of Māori Evaluative Practice and the Findings”, describes the engagement with Whānau Ora of a Whānau Ora collective, Te Hau Āwhiowhio ō Otangarei. Four methods which the action researchers used in the evaluation phase of their action research with the collective are described and critically assessed. In a sense they are thinking out loud so that others might gain insight into their decision-making process about evaluation methods, and their subsequent reflections on how well these decisions worked out.

The final article in this issue is by Heather Nunns, Robin Peace and Karen Witten, entitled “Evaluative Reasoning in Public Sector Evaluation in Aotearoa New Zealand: How Are We Doing?” In this article, reflexivity moves from a private to a public space as the authors undertake a meta-evaluation of publicly available reports of evaluations undertaken for public-sector agencies. Evaluators reading this article might well pause and reflect on whether their own work is up to being scrutinised using the authors’ conceptual framework of: evaluative evaluation objectives/questions; criteria or other comparator(s); defined standards; warranted argument; and an evaluative conclusion or judgement.

I encourage you to consume the wonderful offering that is this inaugural issue: savour it, discuss and debate it, and think about what your second course offering might be in response.

Fiona Cram, PhD  
*Editor-in-Chief*