

## Short Notes

[DSIR: 'Making Science Work For New Zealand'](#).

[Ross Galbreath](#)

[Wellington: Victoria University Press](#). RRP \$49.95. 299pp.

This is an important book that tells the story of the origins and history of New Zealand's Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. Between the time of its establishment in 1926 and its dismantling in 1992 the DSIR had grown to become the world's largest state-owned scientific research body. Among its major themes, the book focuses on 'the vital impact of grasslands research, DSIR's involvement in the development of radar in the second World War, its important contributions to the theory of plate tectonics, the origins and establishment of New Zealand steel, the political context of atomic energy, and earthquake resistant construction.' As much as anything, this is a record of ingenious individuals making major achievements in a climate of scarce resources. In 1992, the National government created ten Crown Research Institutes out of the original DSIR: the jury is still out on whether they are capable of delivering similar results.

[A Dictionary of Modern New Zealand Slang](#).

Edited by [Harry Orsman](#).

[Oxford University Press](#). RRP \$24.95. vi + 153pp.

New Zealand's lexicographer-extraordinaire, [Harry Orsman](#), follows up his celebrated [Dictionary of New Zealand English](#) with an authoritative and amusing look at the colloquial side of the language. Dipping into the great reservoir of New Zealand English for examples of 'the distinctive informal language used by New Zealanders since about 1940' [Orsman](#) provides compelling evidence that in matters of non-standard speech New Zealand owes a lot to the Big Frisbee [Australia]. This is not to suggest that there is a problem with us having traded in words well before agreeing to CER. In an introduction that effortlessly combines scholarship and irreverence, [Orsman](#) notes that about '95 per cent of our vocabulary, slang and all, is shared with other varieties of English; otherwise we would find it difficult to communicate even with Australians, let alone pay our respects to and receive an intelligible reply from our own dear Queen.'

[Writing Wellington: Twenty Years of Victoria University Writing Fellows](#).

Compiled by [Roger Robinson](#).

[Wellington: Victoria University Press](#), 1999. 96pp. RRP \$29.95

The twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the writing fellowship at Victoria University coincides with the University's centenary, and that happy conjunction has enabled the University Press to bring out this celebratory volume which includes a contribution from each of the fellows. The contributions themselves are as diverse as one might expect—both in matter and in manner—from such a varied group of writers, but they all take some aspect of Wellington (whether international port, or capital city, or university centre, or site of student protest) as a starting place for their work. Poetry, fiction and drama combine with personal memories of living in Wellington to create an unusual celebration of a fellowship which, as noted in the Foreword, has been remarkably productive and remarkably successful. The book is handsomely designed and complemented by photographic portraits by [Robert Cross](#).