

## A CALL FOR MORE ACTION

### Five Things You Can Do

1. Reflect on times in your own family life when someone has offered you a helping hand and it has made all the difference.
2. Seek ways, through your Church community or as an individual, that you can do something to help families to treasure their children. This might include - supporting activities at a lower decile school in your area, volunteering your time to help with some form of family support or youth work, or being a good friend to families who may be isolated or in poverty.
3. Invite someone from a local social service provider to talk to your Church about the challenges confronting families.
4. Think hard about political policy statements – what questions can you put to your local politicians and candidates about their policies? Do they have explicit policies about lifting children out of poverty? Do they have clear policies about provision of social services to help children in need?
5. Become a champion for vulnerable children in your community by growing your own and your family's awareness of social justice issues. Visit our website, [www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz](http://www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz) for links to useful information. (Both black and white and colour versions of this pamphlet are available on our website for you to print and share.)

We welcome your ideas and suggestions about issues affecting families and children. If you'd like us to publicise your initiatives let us know. The postal address for NZCCSS is PO Box 12-090, Thorndon, Wellington or email us at [info@justiceandcompassion.org.nz](mailto:info@justiceandcompassion.org.nz)

*NZCCSS members include Anglican Care Network, Baptist Union of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Methodist Church of New Zealand, Presbyterian Support New Zealand and the Salvation Army.*

[www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz](http://www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz)

# Are we looking after our children?



## Let Us Look After Each Other

*Aroha tētahi ki tētahi*



New Zealand Council of  
Christian Social Services



## **It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child**

Our society is a collection of villages where we raise our children and young people.

We believe all children should share similar opportunities and advantages in life. We know this is not always the case, however, it is not all bad. Some very positive steps have been taken over the last decade. For example:

- Child poverty rates appear to have levelled out
- Infant mortality rates have decreased, particularly for Māori
- Officials who work on the frontline of care and protection are responding more quickly
- Communities have taken a strong stand on issues of family violence

## **Our children, our treasure?**

Yet official statistics tell another story...

- At least one in five children live in poverty
- Half of all benefit dependent families live below the poverty line
- Too many of our children are murdered, suffer neglect or abuse, or witness family violence

The levels of poverty and disadvantage in our society remain unacceptable. Many families are struggling to make ends meet as food, power and petrol prices soar. Many also have to deal with issues of debt and addictions or other health issues beyond their control.

## **Building a more just and compassionate society**

Governments play a leadership role in putting policies in place that will support families and communities to value and treasure our children.

Social justice demands that we question those policies. For example, are benefit levels adequate? Is support for low income families reaching all who need it?

One of the roles of NZCCSS is to advocate for policies that better meet the needs of those people who are marginalised by poverty or disadvantage.

Our work is informed by Christian social services who work with families every day. As Christian organisations working with communities, families and their children, they see how much more needs to be done to ensure that all children can take advantage of life's opportunities.

## **Aroha tētahi ki tētahi – Let Us Look After Each Other**

Aroha tētahi ki tētahi is a phrase often used by Māori orators on marae, to express the love that is of the people, for the people.

A biblical equivalent is the call to love our neighbours. As individuals, as families, as communities, the answer to ensuring that our children are nurtured and protected as taonga ultimately rests with us.

Our social service experience shows that a sense of belonging to family and community allows us to look after each other more effectively. Families that are not isolated, but are connected to their friends and communities have the spirit of love for one another - aroha tētahi ki tētahi.

We have made some suggestions on the next page for some practical actions we could all take.

The cover page shows an image of our tamariki (children), blended into a traditional hei matau - a greenstone pendant.

**“Ahakoa he iti - he pounamu - Although they are small they are treasures”**