



*Unless change becomes the constant of our own lives, we'll cease to be change agents in the lives of others.*

– DAVID TIMS

### **Major reform of New Zealand's health system**

Last week, the government announced significant changes to the health system with the aim of ensuring all New Zealanders receive health services they need no matter their address.

DHBs are to be scrapped. In their place will be a new centralised Crown entity, Health New Zealand that will run hospitals and commission primary health care. The changes also introduce a new Māori Health Authority to drive hauora Māori, and establish a public health agency within the Ministry of Health. The Ministry itself will be focused on direction and policy setting.

To effect the reform, the government is aiming to establish interim agencies this year, and to have the reforms in place over the next year.

Read the [government's announcement here](#).

Radio New Zealand [outlines the detail of changes here](#).

The Spinoff's Alex Braae has written [a helpful cheat sheet of the changes](#).

<https://thespinoff.co.nz/politics/21-04-2021/massive-health-sector-overhaul-explained/>

For keen readers, [here's a link to the Simpson review](#) on which the reforms are based, roughly.

### **Concerns winter energy payment is not enough**

On Saturday, pensioners and beneficiaries start getting the winter energy payment.

Single people with no dependent children will get an extra \$20 a week, while couples and people with dependent children will get just over \$30 more.

Age Concern, Grey Power and Auckland Action Against Poverty are among the advocacy organisations voicing concern that the standard rate is not enough. Concern is elevated around how low income New Zealanders will manage given the potential inflationary pressure of New Zealand's hydrolakes being at their lowest levels in 25 years as we head into winter.

Read [more here](#).

## **Fresh look at New Zealand's wealth inequality**

Journalist, author and academic Max Rashbrooke has just published a major working paper, *Wealth Inequality in New Zealand*, using data from the 2017-18 survey of household net worth. The paper was co-written with his father, Geoff Rashbrooke, and Albert Chin from Statistics New Zealand, and published by the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies.

The working paper reveals continuing large inequalities in wealth in this country. Perhaps most interesting, it shows that although housing has captured the nation's attention, it is in fact the most evenly distributed of the major types of wealth. Much more unequally distributed are shares, business ownership and other financial investments – the assets that give control over the productive economy.

Read the [20-page report here](#).

Read the [supporting datasets here](#).

## **Submissions sought on welfare penalty removal**

The Social Security (Subsequent Child Policy Removal) Amendment Bill had its first reading in parliament earlier this month.

The amendment removes the current penalty that kicks in for parents having an additional child while on a benefit. In a [Cabinet minute](#), MSD noted that the existing policy disproportionately impacts Māori and women, increases inequity, compliance requirements and complexity in the welfare system, and reduces the flexibility for parents to spend time with subsequent children.

The Bill is now with the Social Service and Community select committee. Submissions on the Bill close on Wednesday 19 May 2021.

Read [a copy of the bill here](#).

Make [a submission here](#).

## **State of the community and voluntary sector**

ComsVoices this month released its State of the Sector report, spotlighting the impact - and ripples - of the pandemic response on the community and volunteer sector. ComsVoices report that during 2020:

80% of surveyed organisations saw ongoing, increased demands in workload without corresponding funding.

80% of those with government contracts were forced to over-deliver on the services and programmes they were funded to provide.

As a result, over 45% needed to increase their paid staff to meet demand.

At the same time, the pandemic impacted their fundraising, donations and availability of volunteers, with 54% of organisations reporting reduced income and 46% reporting increased costs.

On the encouraging side, the survey also showed that:

75% of respondents reported innovation when delivering their programmes, and new ways of working and collaborating becoming widespread.

40% of organisations saw the value of government contracts increase, and greater flexibility in contract requirements, faster decision-making, and greater partnership was widely reported.

Read the [full report or a summary on the ComVoices website here](#).

## **Join the kōrero with ComVoices**

ComVoices is inviting national and regional peak-bodies and national or regional iwi and kaupapa Māori organisations to a joint call in late May. It will be an opportunity to find it more about the ComVoices network and its planned mahi for the year. There will be space to ask any questions and kōrero ways to engage going forward. If you're interested in participating in a joint call, please get in touch with [ronja@comvoices.org.nz](mailto:ronja@comvoices.org.nz)

ComVoices is a network of national and regional peak bodies. The network amplifies the voices of Aotearoa's community sector to influence decision-makers.

Learn [more about ComVoices here](#).

## **Workforce survey on End of Life practitioner willingness**

The Ministry of Health is anticipating that 1100 people a year will seek access to assisted dying services, with 350 deciding to proceed. Coming into effect from 7 November, the assisted dying regime's biggest challenge is having a ready and willing workforce. A Ministry of Health workforce survey shows that only 10 percent of health practitioners say they are "definitely willing" to provide assisted dying. A further 20 percent say they are "possibly willing".

Health practitioners who conscientiously object are required to refer patients to Support and Consultation for End of Life Care New Zealand (SCENZ). SCENZ, which is due to be set up by 30 June, will maintain a register of medical practitioners willing to assist people seeking voluntary euthanasia.

Read more on [workforce preparedness in this Radio New Zealand article from Guyon Espiner](#).

News of the low level of willingness of medical practitioners comes on the back of expressed concerns around the potential use of unapproved, unregulated and 'off label' medicines.

See this [Radio New Zealand article](#).

## **Submissions sought for cross-sector conversation on ageing**

Age Concern New Zealand (ACNZ) and The New Zealand Association of Gerontology (NZAG) are inviting abstract submissions for oral and poster presentations for their collaborative conference *Vision for Ageing in Aotearoa*. The conference is designed to be broad and inclusive, reflecting the collaborative focus of the conference.

Submissions are welcome from researchers, policymakers, practitioners, service providers and service users. The organisations are seeking to facilitate a cross-sector conversation about how ageing in New Zealand is experienced now, and how it could look into the future. Submissions close on 31 May.

See [the abstract submission guidelines here](#).

## **Charities Services phases out cheques**

Following banking sector changes, Charities Services will no longer accept cheques from charities as payment for annual return fees from June 2021. Charities will be able to pay their annual return fees online through internet banking.

See [guidance for online payment from Charities Services here](#).

## **Review announced to shape the future of local government**

Local Government Minister Nanaia Mahuta has announced an independent review to explore how New Zealand's system of local democracy needs to evolve over the next 30 years.

The review has arisen because of the wave of reforms heading the way of local government. The Government's advancing of an overhaul of the three waters sector and the resource management system are foremost among a suite of reform programmes that have the potential to reshape Aotearoa New Zealand's system of local government.

Chaired by former Chief Executive of the Waimakariri District Council, the review panel will initially focus on how local government will be a key contributor to the wellbeing and prosperity of New Zealand and an essential connection to communities in the governance of New Zealand in the future.

The panel is to engage with iwi/Māori, other stakeholders impacted by changes in local government (e.g. rural communities), the public (including diverse communities), and local and central government representatives, as a minimum.

A final report is due with the Minister on 30 April 2023.

Read the [terms of reference here](#).

We welcome your feedback on POLICY WATCH and other publications produced by the Council, email: [rosemary@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:rosemary@nzccss.org.nz)

Ngā mihi nui

From all of us in the team at NZCCSS

## Justice & compassion in action

NZCCSS member organisations serve thousands of people every day in communities throughout the country

*Copyright © 2021 New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, All rights reserved.*