



AUGUST 2021

It is small acts of love that can transform the world one life at a time. And together they form the vital core of a whole-person approach to justice.

- **Jedd Medefind**, President, Christian Alliance for Orphans

Feedback invited on Commerce Commission supermarket report

The Commerce Commission recently released its report into the grocery sector. No surprises for anyone who shops: New Zealanders pay too much for their food. The Commission's preliminary view is that the core problem is the structure of the market. It describes the competitive market of major retailers, Woolworths NZ and Foodstuffs as a duopoly, and that an increasingly diverse fringe of other grocery retailers has limited impact on competition.

The Commission notes that the persistently high profits being earned by the major retailers and high grocery prices when compared internationally is a signal that the market is not working well, as is the low level of sector innovation compared internationally.

Competitors wanting to enter the market or expand, face significant challenges including a lack of competitively-priced wholesale supply and a lack of suitable sites for large-scale stores.

The report's draft recommendations include:

- Making it easier for new competitors to enter or existing independent retailers to expand by increasing wholesale access to a wide range of groceries at competitive prices. The draft report presents a spectrum of potential options for achieving this.
- Making land more available through changes to planning laws and restrictions on the use of covenants.

You can read the [draft report here](#):

The Commission invites comments on its draft report, which you can provide via [its website here](#).

The deadline for comments is 4pm Thursday 26 August 2021

Feedback sought on Children's Rights

The Government has released its draft 6th periodic Children's Rights report for feedback. The draft report responds to a list of issues received from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The Ministry of Social Development is seeking feedback on the report by Tuesday August 31.

You can read the [draft report here](#).

You can read this List of Issues Prior to Reporting on the [Children's Rights Alliance website here](#).

More information on how to participate in providing feedback is available on [the MSD website here](#).

Find out more about the Children's Convention on the [MSD website here](#).

Submission deadline on Social Cohesion extended

The Government has extended the deadline for public online consultation on improving social cohesion in New Zealand until 10 September.

The consultation is providing the opportunity for New Zealanders to provide feedback on a broad range of social cohesion proposals – from how social cohesion should be defined and measured to how it can be upheld and supported in law.

While the Ministry of Social Development reports that many people have already shared their views, the communities it has consulted with have requested that extra time be allowed for more people to participate. Having heard the request and agreed, MSD is extending the online consultation period on social cohesion for a further four weeks to give communities more time to make submissions.

You can [provide your view to MSD here](#).

Nursing workforce issue reaching crisis

The current New Zealand Nurses Organisation (NZNO) pay and conditions claim seeks to ensure that nurses working for DHBs receive pay commensurate with their skills and experience a safe working environment. NZCCSS welcomes the claim but believes that any higher pay secured through the claim needs to apply to all nurses no matter who funds or employs them. The NZNO claim applies only to DHB nurses and excludes the 20,000 registered nurses who work for not-for-profit and community-based health services providers. Such providers, including those in the residential aged care sector, are not in a position to compete with DHBs. Years of under-funding in the sector has already resulted in an exodus of nursing care staff to higher paid roles. With a crisis looming, and the very real prospect of not-for-profit and community provider services reducing or closing, NZCCSS has been urging the Government to review its investment. What NZCSS maintains is needed is:

- for Treasury to fund parity for all registered nurses.
- Urgent international recruitment of nurses, including bonding to areas of need.
- State-sponsored scholarships to qualify our existing international nurses to meet New Zealand Nursing Council standards.

Hear more about this issue in a Radio New Zealand interview with NZCCSS Executive Officer Nikki Hurst and NZCCSS policy group member and Manager of Enliven Services for Presbyterian Support Central Nicola Turner. [Listen here](#).

NZCCSS submissions on Government Policy Statement on Housing

In mid-June the government invited submissions on its policy statement on Housing and Urban Development. The statement proposes to ensure affordable homes for all - from ownership to rental options – and homes that are healthy and secure and located within a thriving, inclusive and sustainable society. It aims to address the disproportionate low home ownership of Pacific Peoples in Aotearoa, and to prevent homelessness.

With contributions from NZCCSS policy groups and its networks, NZCCSS centred its submission on the need for publicly-funded financial guarantees or other forms of financial investment to social services or community providers. This would enable social services with land assets to proceed with building programmes and providing social housing. As NZCCSS has reviewed the housing crisis this year it has observed that the state is not actually building state houses. These are being built through public-private partnerships – following the market model of provision. Case studies of this model, such as in Porirua, show how local people are being displaced by higher income buyers able to purchase the new houses.

The NZCCSS submission supported a model of partnership that is distinct from the private sector interests. It proposed that government significantly expand partnerships with Community Housing Providers as a model of addressing housing supply – a model that will bring the added value of community building aspects to housing. Last week, Minister Megan Woods announced more of this kind of support for community providers.

NZCCSS also facilitated a submission from the Tenant’s Advocacy Network (TAN), for which it has a co-ordination role. TAN members bring a specifically rental perspective and the emphasis of this submission was on the responsibility of the state to build and provide state housing. TAN states: ‘With 22,803 on the state housing waiting list, it is imperative that the government proceeds with a state house building programme.’

Affordability is the theme shared by both community providers and rental advocacy groups, and the submissions called for the defining of affordability – possibly as no more than 30% of rent or mortgage costs. Currently in Aotearoa New Zealand, investors own about 30% of houses, weighting home ownership with the wealthiest. Regulation is key to addressing affordability and state housing is required as it can offer more equity for affordable and secure housing.

You can read the full consultation document on the Housing and Urban Development [website here](#)

Strengthening protections against incitement of hatred and discrimination

Late June, the Ministry of Justice invited feedback on proposals to strengthen protections against incitement of hatred and discrimination. The proposals focus on three areas: increasing the groups protected by incitement provisions; making clearer what behaviour the law prohibits and increasing consequences for breaking the law; and, improving the protection against wider discrimination.

In its submission, NZCCSS expressed support for all six proposals. It additionally suggested that the grounds under which people are protected – eg, colour, race, ethnicity – needed to be extended to include other factors such as age, sexuality and ability.

NZCCSS expressed a concern that in limiting incitement to incidences of “hatred” only, the revised wording of the law would remove the ability to act on anything less than extreme situations. NZCCSS recommended retaining the existing wording that incorporates ill will, contempt and ridicule.

See the discussion document here. [Incitement-Discussion-Document.pdf \(justice.govt.nz\)](#)

Attracting more than 10,000 submissions, the submissions closed 6 August. A summary of submissions will be published on the Ministry of Justice website here. [Proposals against incitement](#)

State of New Zealand Communities

The Salvation Army released its *State of our Communities 2021* report this week. The report provides a snapshot of stories from the 'litmus' communities of Tokoroa, Carterton and Invercargill. In releasing the report, the Salvation Army noted the disparity that can occur across the motu:

“Some of the current government’s advancements in economic welfare, climate change and digitalisation can often result in disproportionate impacts between urban centres and small-town New Zealand. Ensuring the welfare of smaller communities in NZ such as Tokoroa, Carterton and Invercargill are critical to food, energy and resource provision our nation relies on.”

The 2021 report shows that seniors and youth are bearing the brunt of a lack of spending on educational facilities and healthcare in small towns. Report author Ana Ika says challenges facing small towns in New Zealand need innovative and creative solutions often already known by locals. “But these small communities can’t do it alone. Central government, local government and local communities all hold a piece of the puzzle. Overcoming these challenges requires collaboration.”

You can read the [report here](#).

Call for urgent help for COVID-19 impacted disadvantaged children and families

Aotearoa New Zealand’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic has seen the country heralded as a leader internationally. While our contagion and mortality rates have been among the most envied in the world, the strategies employed have left their mark in other ways. The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) recently released a report analysing the impact of the pandemic and the country’s response on low income children one year on. CPAG says that its report confirms “the severe impacts our low-income children faced during COVID. Some of these experiences [were] also compounded by already existing entrenched systemic inequities and institutional racism. This exposition highlights the mahi the government needs to address with urgency now, to close the gaps in poverty to ensure our most vulnerable do not continue to bear the highest burden in times of pandemic.”

You can read [the CPAG report here](#).

Funding available for older people community plans and projects

The 2021 funding round for the Office for Seniors ‘Age friendly Fund’ (formerly known as the Community Connects Grants Programme) is now open. The Fund supports projects that promote the inclusion and contribution of older people in community life and support their community to prepare for an ageing population.

The programme makes one-off grants of between \$5,000 - \$15,000, funding a select number of projects that demonstrate innovative approaches to age-friendly communities and projects that support intergenerational connection and participation.

You can apply for funding to either:

- start development of an Age Friendly Communities Plan, or
- implement an age-friendly community Project.

The Age friendly Fund is open to any New Zealand council, community organisation, or registered non-profit organisation. All proposals must be supported by their local council.

Applications for the 2021 funding round are open from Wednesday 4th August and close on Monday 4th October.

For more information, including eligibility criteria, go to [the SuperSeniors website](#)

Recruitment of Aged Care Commissioner underway

Minister for Seniors and Associate Minister of Health Ayesha Verrall reports that recruitment for Aotearoa New Zealand's first Aged Care Commissioner has begun. She expects the Commissioner to be in place within the next six months. Sitting within the Health and Disability Commissioner's office, the role has been created in order to provide greater confidence in the quality and safety of services for older people.

In 2020/21, the Health and Disability Commissioner and the Advocacy Service received 259 complaints about aged residential care, and 147 complaints about home and community support services. Communication issues were the most common theme, including failure to communicate effectively with family. Inadequate care and treatment issues were also among the most common concerns raised.

It is projected that by 2034 there will be 1.2 million people in New Zealand aged 65 and over. Says Minister Verrall:

"Although many older people are living healthier for longer, demand for aged care services is also expected to increase.

"The Aged Care Commissioner will be critical to improving the aged care system for the wellbeing of those reliant on this help, and those closest to them."

Report on MoH stewardship of services for people with intellectual disability

In 2019, the Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier began a self-initiated investigation into the Ministry of Health's stewardship of DHB services provided to people with an intellectual disability, particularly those requiring secure care and rehabilitation, and about the conditions in which some were being detained. The investigation examined the administrative practices of the Ministry in relation to the facilities and services provided, particularly to people with an intellectual disability who are subject to the High and Complex Framework. The Framework is the underpinning mechanism that guides the provision of specialist support services. At the end of July 2021, Peter Boshier released his report, Oversight, in which he found that the Ministry's stewardship had not been adequate.

"Problems had built up over the years, especially capacity problems. The Ministry of Health didn't do what was needed to address these problems and stop them getting bigger. This meant people needing Framework services were not always able to be placed in suitable accommodation.

"In some cases, court proceedings were being deferred, and some people were spending longer in prison while waiting for a hospital placement. The DHBs providing Framework services raised their concerns with the Ministry. But the Ministry didn't do enough to plan, monitor, act, or develop a long-term, strategic response."

You can read the [Ombudsman's report here.](#)]