



CLOSER TOGETHER WHAKATATA MAI



REDUCING INEQUALITIES

During the next few weeks NZCCSS is launching a new project calling on everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand to help us get *Closer Together Whakatata Mai* by reducing income inequality.

Income inequality is the difference between those who earn most and those who earn least. In the past 25 years high earners have increased their incomes by more than 25%. At the same time people on lower incomes have seen their incomes actually **decrease!***

New Zealand is “world leader” in growth in income inequality. In Aotearoa we have gone from being one of the most equal countries to one of the most unequal in the OECD** within two decades. This has been accompanied by worsening health and social outcomes: higher imprisonment rates, more teen pregnancies, rising obesity levels and poorer mental health.

There are very good reasons for increasing fairness by reducing income inequality in our communities. Communities with less inequality work together better, are healthier, suffer fewer social problems and are more environmentally sustainable.

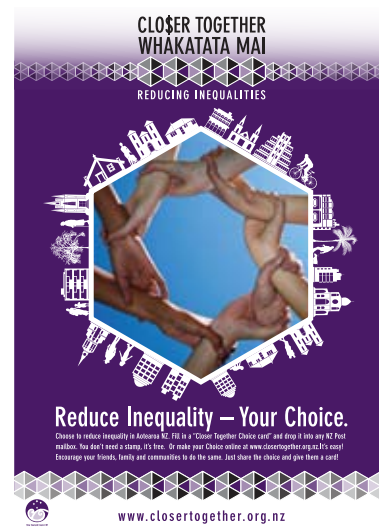
Inequality is hurting us all. Our chances of “getting ahead” as individuals, whānau, families or as a country are worse because of high inequality.

Economic growth on its own will not make us happier, healthier, or more successful as a country. It is not total income (GDP) of a country that counts but how fairly that income is shared out.

A more equal country is better for all of us regardless of how wealthy we are. Income inequality is closely related to other disparities in wealth, health and social outcomes. The income and wealth differences are too big – and government, local councils, political parties, companies, iwi, community organisations and media all need to do something about this.

* Household disposable incomes after adjusting for inflation (Social Report 2010)

** Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – group of the world’s 30 wealthiest countries



NZCCSS is asking people to join together to call on decision makers at all levels of our society act to reduce inequality.

The *Closer Together Whakatata Mai* Choice will be going out to our contacts in social services, church networks, community organisations, businesses and individuals. We are asking people to sign up to show their support for reducing inequality and to get involved in ways to reduce inequality at local, regional and national level.

The website www.closetogether.org.nz will be focus for information and action, so watch this space as we look to launch the site after Easter.

Contact us for more information at closetogether@nzccss.org.nz.

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Community Housing meets Retirement Villages – affordable housing for older people

A recent forum organized by the Retirement Villages Association for not-for-profit retirement village operators was an opportunity to focus on the particular contribution of Christian social services to the sector. NZCCSS along the Salvation Army and Tamahere Eventide provided input into a panel on affordable housing for older people.

Retirement villages have been a rapidly growing part of the property development and housing market in New Zealand over the three decades. Two of the darling companies of the stock exchange – Rymans Healthcare and Metlife – are retirement village companies. Targeting older people with significant assets these companies have successfully built up a niche in housing for older people to the point where around 5% of older people (25,000) live in some form of retirement village.

But what about the half of older people identified in the Retirement Commissioner's review last year who have few or no assets and have little or nothing to supplement their NZ Super income?

Half of older people receive only NZ Super or at most \$100 per week additional income to NZ Super. NZ Super \$339 (single, living alone after tax)

www.retirement.org.nz

NZCCSS member organisations are significant participants in the retirement villages sector, with not-for-profit operators making up around one fifth of the 321 retirement villages in NZ and many of those are church social services based. As not for profit operators in a market that is larger commercial, they face the challenge of combining justice & compassion with good management sense. The emerging challenges of our ageing population, many of whom will be carrying into their retirement the wealth and income inequalities that have defined their pre-retirement lives. Life on one-third the average wage (single persons NZ Super) is a challenge for anyone, especially if you do not own your own home mortgage free or are renting.

Older Renters

Older renters are a large and growing group very vulnerable to changes in superannuation, housing and social services policy. Half of older renters are in private market and their number will more than double over coming decades. Many of those older people are renting council flats, with two thirds of Territorial Local Authorities (TLAs) tenants aged over 65. Although the proportion of Housing NZ Corporation (HNZC) tenants aged over 65 is lower, there are still thousands of older people renting from HNZC.

Multiple Challenges in a Dysfunctional Housing Market

The older people housing sector faces multiple challenges: Growing income & wealth inequalities for older people–

historically superannuation policy in NZ has done an adequate job of protecting older people from excessive hardship in old age. The combination of the ageing population, the push for “smaller government” and declining asset wealth among older people (thanks to the combination of finance sector collapse and declining home ownership rates, among other factors) means that a gulf is opening up between a wealthy minority of older people and the rest of the over-65s.

Many of those older people are living in poor quality houses, not well insulated or heated and not appropriately designed or modified to suit their needs as they age (see Good Home project)

Insecure tenancies continue to be a problem for all renters in this country but older people (along with children) are the most vulnerable to its impacts. There are simply not enough pensioner rental units that are affordable for a person dependent on NZ Super.

The growing incidence of people living with dementia is one example of the urgent need for a range of models of rental housing with support for older people living in the community with high needs.

Regional variations: some regions in New Zealand (Bay of Plenty, Nelson,) will have to adjust to more rapid ageing of their populations as some of the larger urban areas in Auckland. But as the Government's housing focus has shifted almost entirely onto Auckland, other regions may find themselves “on their own” in responding to older people's housing needs.

Social housing in limbo: the social and community housing sectors continue to be in limbo as they wait of the current Government to make up its mind about the changes proposed out of the 2010 Housing Shareholders Advisory Group work.

Public Private Partnerships are the great hope: the Government appears unwilling to commit any additional capital to social housing and is pinning its hopes on a kind of “magical” synergy between the community housing sector and private housing investors leveraging off current Government housing assets. But no decisions have been made or announced it seems, making investment decisions for all those involved even more difficult.

Local authorities: continue to be the mainstay of older people's housing in many parts of the country. Two-thirds of LA tenants are older people but those local authorities are in many cases reluctant landlords who are not keen to invest ratepayer money in run-down pensioner units.

Health & social service spending cuts are further exacerbating the housing pressures for low income older people. The very support networks that help them manage in often inadequate housing are themselves being put under funding pressure from central government cut backs as well as pressure on philanthropic funding.



Housing policy shift

In December Community Housing Aotearoa reported some of the details about the significant shift in housing policy that the Government is apparently implementing:

The Department of Building and Housing (DBH) is taking over all housing policy responsibility and HNZC will no longer have a housing policy lead role.

“Proven performers” in the community sector what a track record of successful housing development are the priority for Government. Groups such as IHC, NZ Housing Foundation, Salvation Army, Habitat for Humanity, ComCare, Vision West are examples of the favoured operators. Some of these groups, notably the Salvation Army, are investing in affordable rental housing for older people, but more will be needed.

Auckland city is the dominant focus for Government social housing, at the risk of excluding all else it would appear. The extent and urgency of Auckland’s housing problems mean that it may well be difficult to get adequate attention to affordable rental housing for older people in other regions.

Housing Innovation Fund: there is unanimous agreement that that a new improved successor to the Housing

Innovation Fund is urgently needed. It needs to be bigger and use other financing methods (e.g. grants rather than loans).

Independent Social Housing Reference Group to be established: there is also talk of an independent reference group for the social housing sector, but nothing more has been heard about this since Christmas.

Moral imperative to act

Christian social services are driven by their compassion and concern for the wellbeing of older people and there is a need for our sector to take a lead in developing new responses to older peoples’ housing needs. If the not-for-profit sector does not lead this work, it may be done badly or not at all. This does not however, excuse Government or the wider business and community sector from the moral imperative to act.

Ways needs to be found for the investment needed from the private sector to be married to the ideas from the not-for-profit sector to meet the growing needs. This will need to be supported a consistent and good quality and long term public housing policy planning - something that is not yet coming into view.

The Unaffordability of the Kiwi Bacon and Egg Pie

VULNERABILITY REPORT Issue 8 MARCH 2011

Aroha tātaihi ki tātaihi
Let us look after each other

INTRODUCTION: Looking after each other better

Whether it is our citizens unemployed, our children needing love and food, our whānau in Christchurch, or our fellow members of the human family in Japan, the last few months provide a clear illustration of how our wellbeing depends upon one another. We either look after each other, or we fail.

The eighth Vulnerability Report covers the last quarter of 2010 and explores the experiences and pressure points for both families and social service agencies. Data from Christian agencies who are members of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) is supplemented with data provided by other community based organisations and placed in the wider economic context. More recent data is included where possible.

RECOVERY DEFERRED

"The recovery has been deferred." The NZIER tell us there is likely to be little economic growth in 2011 because of 'underlying weakness in the economy... compounded by a synchronised spike in food and fuel prices... [and] the devastating earthquake in Canterbury'. At the time of writing, inflation was still predicted to "peak at 4.6% in March 2011."

New Zealand real GDP growth

Prices rose on average by 4% last year. The latest data we have for household incomes from all sources is for the June 2010 year. It shows that median household income increased by only 0.1% in the year to June 30 2010. Median incomes from all sources for those aged 20-24 fell by 12.5%. Not surprisingly, our young people are angry and our food banks are in high demand. Youth unemployment (16.8%) is nearly three times general unemployment (6.8%). Māori youth unemployment (27.4%) is four times general unemployment. Then there are 20% of our children living in benefit dependent households and approaching half of the caregivers in these are Māori.

One day we will write a Vulnerability Report which says foodbanks are no longer required, no one wants budgeting services and counselling services are sitting empty. Unfortunately, this one is not it.

We’ve all read the headlines. Milk is a ridiculous price, and people are having trouble feeding their kids. All this shows up in the Vulnerability Report for the last quarter of last year. People can’t afford the basics. For example, let’s take the old kiwi staple bacon and egg pie:

- Milk, cheese and eggs (annual increase 12.6%)**
- Vegetables to go with it (15.4%)**
- Petrol to buy the ingredients (14.2%)**
- Electricity to cook the pie (5%)**
- Cigarettes to recover from the shock of the cost of all the above (17%)**

Budgeting services are over-stretched, with one reporting a 3-4 week waiting list. Others also have waiting lists and more are training new volunteers. Even if last year’s earthquake is excluded, the Salvation Army gave out double the parcels in 2010 than they gave out in 2009.

Poverty leads to stress; stress leads to anger and fear; anger and fear leads to bad situations. Many services reported heavy use of their counselling services. The common theme - angry children. Children behaving badly and parents being physically abusive. Children bullying or being bullied. Relationship pressures. Inappropriate parenting. Family violence.

NZCCSS president Ruby Duncan summarised the situation: “The queues for foodbanks, for budget advice, for emergency housing and for family counselling are the highest they have ever been – even before February 22nd, now the pressure across all of New Zealand is at boiling point.



We need a Budget that delivers jobs and provides for more community based services so that stressed out families get the support they need.”

We do desperately need a budget that cares for our people. Auckland is already around 10,000 houses short and 10,000 families in Christchurch will have their homes demolished. Another 100,000 households in Christchurch have homes which need fixing. Our budget writers might reflect on being seen to be spending up large on cars with heated seats, a \$9.8 million cloud, a \$2 million plastic waka,

and a giant \$12 million rugby ball while people go without homes going into winter.

There are too many people facing too much. We are also forgetting our basic interdependence. Our eighth vulnerability report notes that “whether it is our citizens unemployed, our children needing love and food, our whānau in Christchurch, or our fellow members of the human family in Japan; the last quarter of 2010 provides a graphic illustration of how our wellbeing depends upon one another. We either look after each other, or we fall.”

Meet the team



Philippa Fletcher, second from right.

Philippa Fletcher joined us as policy adviser fresh from the shaky isles of Christchurch in October last year. Philippa’s last job was with Canterbury District Health Board where she worked as a public health analyst specialising in community mental wellbeing. Ironically, the last workshop she ever presented in that role was to Civil Defence on stress in emergency situations.

She comes to us with an academic background in economics, political science and mediation. Philippa was also a long term member of the National Advisory Council on the Employment of Women where she was instrumental in initiating the first New Zealand Childcare Survey. Other roles included membership of the ‘Like Minds Like Mine’ anti-discrimination campaign, and workplace chaplaincy.

She comments that she is very pleased to be able to work for NZCCSS. “I get to work with great colleagues! I also get to use my creative energy, analytical skills and empathy with those who struggle.” Philippa publishes the quarterly Vulnerability Reports and the fortnightly Policy Watch, she also works on policy and submissions relating to children and families and facilitates the Researchers Network.

Philippa is a Quaker. She is married to Jonathan Fletcher and has two adult children, one stepson and Jeff the Border collie. She and her husband have now shifted to Wellington. But back in Christchurch, their daughter deals with the EQC, a house with an interesting lean, and an odd type of geyser arrangement in their back garden.

Manaaki Hapori Enhancing Communities



Manaaki Hapori has got a new Kaiwhakarite - Jo Paku from Ngāti Kahungunu and Rongomaiwahine and the website pages at www.nzccss.org.nz also have a new look.

The new banner is inspired by NZCCSS and the kumara vine, it is designed by Lee Watt from Chamblett Design in Akaroa, he also hails from Ngati Kahungunu and Rongomaiwahine.

The manawa aho or continuous centre line runs through the entire pattern as the main Kumara vine (NZCCSS) and it is the connection with which all other vines (members) stem from. This represents the idea of networking and unbroken connections. The many koru elements that grow from the main vine represent individual kumara (churches), they are fruitful, plentiful and in abundance. These koru also represent our being connected and closer together.



The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

Welfare Working Group Recommendations

The Welfare Working Group (WWG) released its “Reducing Long-Term Benefit Dependency Recommendations” on February 22nd, 2011 – about 10 minutes after the earthquake struck Christchurch. The first event completely submerged any impact of the report’s release and it will have been difficult for Government to gauge public reaction to the recommendations it contains. As we know, the national Government prefers to test the wind of public sentiment prior to making any decisions on these kinds of reports. However, given the Budget is due to be released next month we can expect to see some action around some of the recommendations in the fiscal forecasting.

Given the large budget and sizable team of academics and analysts available to the WWG it would be reasonable to expect a well thought out report that took account of the drivers that resulted in people receiving benefits longer term. To be delivered a report that responded thoughtfully and effectively to the huge number of submissions and the large amount of New Zealand and international research available to it. Instead it produced a shallow document that appears to be based on the assumption that people are on benefits because they actively choose not to work and if given the opportunity will attempt to defraud the system. There are some positive aspects in the report, there are some punitive aspects which have the potential to be damaging and there are some downright ugly recommendations.

The Good

There are a number of recommendations concerning getting health services and supports to people as quickly as possible so that they are not consigned to wait endlessly on a sickness benefit waiting to get readily treatable illness fixed. It recommends that people in need of elective treatment for illnesses that DHBs currently do not do or have very long waiting lists for such as joint or hernia operations or intensive physiotherapy get this treatment early so they can continue working.

The WWG advocates for expanded and improved mental health treatment programmes and facilities and for hugely increased access to drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities. They call for the establishment of many more teen parenting units in schools so that young mums can continue their education. The report seeks greater responsiveness and integration of government departments, more early childhood education centres in low socioeconomic communities and greater access to out of school programmes.

The Bad

Of concern to NZCCSS is the fact that rather than building on New Zealand’s tradition as an inclusive and egalitarian

country where social welfare is grounded on everyone having a reasonable standard of living and the ability to be participating members of society this report focuses exclusively on employment and forward liability. The concept of forward liability is one of forecasting the possible life-time cost of a person in receipt of a benefit and gauging the success of the social welfare system on whether the system reduces this likely long term cost. NZCCSS believes that a far better measure of success is whether the welfare system provides a reasonable standard of living, the ability to live an inclusive life, raise a healthy family and develop the skills to gain meaningful, adequately paid work.

The Ugly

The underpinning tone of the recommendations is one of lack of trust, control and direction. Parents in receipt of a benefit are to be assessed to see if their children are “at risk” and if they are deemed to be so they will be forced to attend parenting and budgeting classes. If they don’t attend their benefits will be paid to third parties to manage or they will be given “payment cards” so they can only purchase approved goods.

People who fail “work tests” will have their benefits progressively cut and have stand-down periods even after they comply with requirements. A public ‘dob-in-a-beneficiary’ campaign is proposed so that “public tolerance of benefit fraud is reduced” – this will only further isolate an already marginalised and vulnerable group. Beneficiaries who are on a benefit for longer than 6 months will have their accommodation allowance reduced – to incentivise them to look for work harder. Those who have been able to get some part-time work will have their current \$80 (before tax) income level before their benefit is reduced cut back to only \$25 – to encourage them to find additional hours to work! The list goes on...

NZCCSS is concerned that the focus on ‘a job – any job’ and the financial forward liability will result in an undermining of the overall wellbeing of New Zealand families. In this time of economic constraint it will be easy to partially fund one or two of the positive recommendations in this report and then to implement a whole swathe of the negative recommendations. The end result will be a few better-off families and individuals and many more being placed in hugely difficult positions and being further marginalised. If you are concerned about the tone and direction of these recommendations contact your local MP or write to the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Social Welfare and let them know your feelings. For further information NZCCSS has completed an analysis of the very disjointed and difficult to follow report which is available on our website (www.nzccss.org.nz).





Thousands of Kiwis make a difference in their neighbourhoods

New Zealand's inaugural celebration of neighbourliness (26-27 March) 2011 was a success. Neighbours Day Aotearoa is all about encouraging Kiwis to make some time to celebrate our great neighbourhoods and get to know our neighbours better – wave, smile, talk, socialise – even if it's for the very first time.



Tamati Coffey from TVNZ's Breakfast promotes Neighbours Day Aotearoa to the country over a BBQ with neighbours in Massey, Auckland.

The organising team is a partnership between LIFEWISE, Inspiring Communities and Methodist Missions Aotearoa, all not-for-profit organisations with a focus on supporting strong local communities. They also acknowledge support from many organisations across various sectors.

"It's been great to see residents, community organisations and groups, local Councils, authorities, and businesses coming together to support this vision", says Rebecca Harrington (LIFEWISE project team member and founder of the Know Your Neighbours project on Auckland's North Shore which was the beginning of Neighbours Day in NZ). "We're really grateful to the dozens of organisations who put a lot of effort into spreading the word. We've formed special links with many other organisations who also support the vision of building stronger neighbourhoods. It's been awesome to see how many people share our enthusiasm and understand the potential long-term benefits that begin from us knowing our neighbours better and that this could make a real difference to the quality of life in New Zealand."

Over 50 organisations and 40 newspapers and radio stations around the country spread the word, as well as TVNZ's Breakfast with Tamati Coffey on Friday 25 March. Dozens of organisations are officially listed as supporters of Neighbour Day Aotearoa 2011, all of which have spread the word through their networks– including Westpac and Burger Wisconsin who promoted to their customers nationwide.

The team is now busy trying to evaluate the initiative, and they hope an online survey will help build the picture. "So far the indications have been very encouraging," says Rebecca.

"Given we had virtually no advertising budget (a little in Wellington and Auckland thanks to Council funding) and relied largely on organisations and individuals spreading the word, we're incredibly happy with the amount of support and are hearing about hundreds of neighbourly connections made".

"Because the idea of Neighbours Day Aotearoa is focused on locally organised gatherings in homes, backyards, or footpaths across the country, gauging exact levels of participation is always going to be a challenge", says Rebecca. But feedback so far is such that "we think the real level of involvement is a lot higher than we can see or measure."

Preston Cres, Dunedin: A shining example of Neighbours Day Aotearoa in action

Phillip Smith enthusiastically expressed his thanks for Neighbours Day Aotearoa being a catalyst to ignite connections with neighbours in his street. "Many neighbours met each other for the first time on Neighbours Day," Phillip says. "There were lots of people, lots of food, and lots of discussion. We talked about how we can help each other in an emergency and we've since circulated a list of contact numbers and emails. Our neighbours are keen to meet again! We might do a mid-Winter feast and ask other neighbours further up and down the street to join us. "

Phillip is also grateful for the support of Dunedin's community newspaper 'The Star' in promoting the initiative. "People are saying it's good someone has organised this and it's all about making a difference, 'being the one'. Thank you Neighbours Day Aotearoa (and our local paper) for being the 'one'."

Journey towards 2012 and beyond

The team is keen to keep the awareness of the benefit of strong neighbourhoods alive throughout the year, and is working towards another Neighbours Day Aotearoa celebration for the last weekend of March (24-25th) in 2012.

"We want to make it really easy for people to hear about this movement of neighbourliness and get involved," she says. Everyone has neighbours of some kind, and we want everyone in New Zealand to be able to take part, with no barriers of language, technology or resources".

"We hope Neighbours Day Aotearoa will become something that belongs to all New Zealanders," says Rebecca, "The idea is to be a catalyst for building stronger neighbourhoods every day. We hope this will become an annual celebration and ultimately an ongoing part of our Kiwi culture, that will have a positive impact on our communities long term."

For more information and stories: www.neighboursday.org.nz. Email: kiaora@neighboursday.org.nz



Building Relationships not Fences.



Churches in Orakei banded together with several community groups and the Orakei Marae to reach out to some of their neighbours to celebrate Neighbours Day Aotearoa.

“There is little community spirit in town,” says Auntie Margaret Swan, who was born and raised on the Orakei waterfront. When she returned there after many years away she made this shocking discovery and decided to do something about it on behalf of the Orakei Marae.

She is delighted with the Neighbour Day event held early in April at Kupe Reserve, a small reserve tucked in behind the local Anglican Church, the tennis club and some blocks of flats.

The neighbourhood support rep agrees. “We need to look after each other and that means getting to know one another. When I first moved here every one thought I was a nosey parker, now they know they can come to me for help and advice anytime”.

All the churches contributed with music, dance, face painting, and food and by just being there. The local playgroup, the community centre and some local businesses also supported the event.

The Rev'd Nick Frater of St James Anglican Church says many people these days live and work in isolation and he wanted to try and use Neighbours Day to build community in the immediate vicinity of his church. Since he's been in Orakei he's also built good relations with Orakei Marae, who were really keen to join in.

One of the marae's kaumatua, Bob..., welcomed everyone to the event with a bit of history of the area and said that the three hapu in Orakei, with affiliations to both Tainui and Ngāti Whatua. They have always been welcoming and accommodating to new people in the area. He illustrated that attitude with the words, “We never build fences.”



Kaumatua Bob and Rev'd Nick of Orakei

Earthquake Responses

The Christchurch community has once again proved its resourcefulness and resilience in responding not once, but twice to the earthquakes that have beset them. Individuals, students, businesses, government departments, helping agencies and Christian social services have all committed themselves to making a real difference, not only in the immediate aftermath of the quakes, but in the longer haul.

As Executive Officer of NZCCSS I have been privileged to go to Christchurch on a number of occasions to meet with social service agencies and Christian organisations that have been working since day one to provide support for their communities. Many churches provided relief centres, soup kitchens, door knocking squads and pastoral support in the psychosocial/responding to immediate trauma phase.

The Christian social service agencies provided skilled counsellors, social workers and community organisers to back up the work of Civil Defence and the Police. I was struck in these meetings by the selflessness of the individuals, the desire to collaborate and work together displayed by the organisations and by the courage of the helpers, many of whom were fragile and deeply impacted personally by the earthquake.

NZCCSS was able to provide a small amount of assistance in a couple of ways. Very quickly after the earthquake we contacted Minister Paula Bennett's office to see what support we could provide.

We were asked to respond to an email sent to the Minister's Office by Libby Robins, Director of the Christchurch based Family Help Trust asking for a website that would allow Christchurch NGOs to update their status and contact information. With the voluntary support of Peter Cowley, from the Wellington IT firm Cowley Consulting, NZCCSS was able to get this site up and running and promoted to the Christchurch community. Over 100 NGOs have registered with the site being well used to keep each other notified of changing addresses and phone numbers (www.ngoupdater.org.nz)

Each week and each weekend the Salvation Army were sending large groups of their members to Christchurch to provide hands on support, door knocking in the suburbs to meet, greet and check on welfare and provide counselling and support where necessary. NZCCSS also worked with the Salvation Army, providing a pool of volunteers from member Churches, Christian social service agencies, other social service providers and marae who were able to bolster the Salvation Army squads with additional skilled people. NZCCSS received hundreds of offers to volunteer along with offers for accommodation and other support. We were unable to place all of the people who offered their support or to facilitate many of the other offers made. We are very humbled by the huge generosity shown and thank all volunteers of services and support for their generosity of spirit and love for their fellow humanity.

He mihi hōhonu ki a koutou katoa.



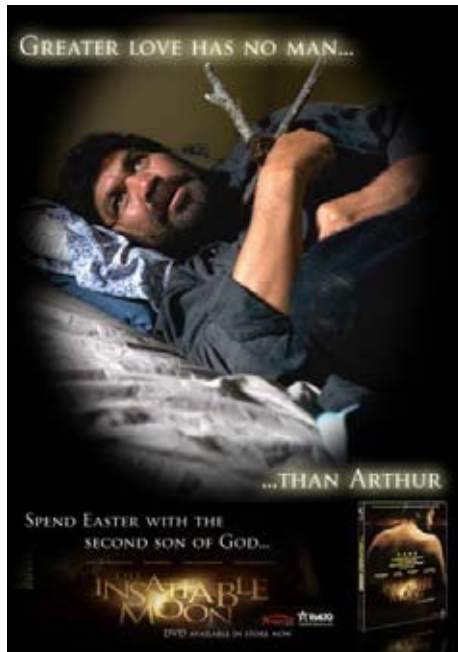
Easter With Arthur

Makers of the independent New Zealand film *The Insatiable Moon* are touting it as an Easter reflection. They claim that Arthur – the hero of the story, played by Rawiri Paratene – will bring more pleasure to Easter than any number of chocolate eggs.

Arthur of Ponsonby may not be Jesus of Nazareth, but he does claim to be the second son of God, and sets out to tell the world. He's also a Maori psychiatric patient living in a boarding house. When asked if he's God, he replies: "Nah – just a rellie". As in the original gospels, Arthur has a habit of innocently tipping prejudice and materialism on its head with a great line of insightful humour. For Easter traditionalists, there's even a death and half a resurrection.

Screenwriter Mike Riddell, a former Baptist minister, says people shouldn't get upset that the second son of God seems to indulge in an adulterous affair. "After all," he says, "Jesus had a foot rub from a prostitute. The gospels are full of scandal." Like the original Messiah, Arthur hangs out with the down and outs – including a homeless alcoholic (Ian Mune),

a former paedophile, and a ragtag bunch of street people with various mental health problems. Together they create mayhem and hilarity as they face off with the 'normal' Ponsonby inhabitants.



The novel by the same name, on which the movie was based, was regarded by some as blasphemous, and even referred to the Censor's office as "potentially pornographic". It cost Riddell his job as a lecturer in theology. "I was just pleased crucifixion had gone out of fashion," he reflects.

The movie, denied production funding by the NZ Film Commission, has become something of a cult classic since its release, earning praise both here and in Britain where it recently opened in Leicester Square. The prestigious Empire magazine awarded it four stars and described it as "a moving original film that deserves to be seen." Just in time for Easter, the film is being released into the NZ market on DVD on April 13. Riddell hopes the story of Arthur will provide

some Easter joy to the world. "He's a half-baked miracle worker, and like a good Edmonds recipe, sure to rise."

The Insatiable Moon DVD is available nationwide in stores, or online from www.vendettafilms.co.nz

Conferences, Training & Events

Action for Children & Youth Aotearoa
Responding to UNCRC: the work ahead
Saturday 7 May 2011, 9.30am - 4.30pm
St Barnabas Church, Mt Eden, Auckland
judith.mcm@xtra.co.nz by Friday 29 April

Victory Village Forum, Nelson. 27-29 April 2011
NZ's inaugural conference about family centred, community-led development. For more information bookmark the website: www.confer.co.nz/VictoryForum

Certificate of Pastoral Care of Ageing People
Selwyn Centre for Ageing and Spirituality
Courses running in Christchurch, Tauranga, Auckland and Palmerston North
Contact: Chris Perkins chrisp@selwyncare.org.nz
Ph 09 8460119 x814

Dementia: Thinking About memory problems: before, during & after a diagnosis of Dementia
Professor Jill Manthorpe, 12th May 3 – 4.15pm St Johns Centre
170 Willis St, Wellington

Eden in Oz
Implementing Eden Alternative in Aged Care
18 – 20th May 2011, Plimmerton Boat Club Wellington
Contact: admin@edeninoz.com.au

KETE KUPU WORD BASKET

Kete Kupu Word Basket has had a makeover and now comes to you in full colour. Look out for the special May issue featuring Closer Together Whakatata Mai.

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