



Number 3 - March 2009

## Time to listen to the “Grassroots Voices”

NZCCSS is delighted to release its latest research, **Grassroots Voices**, which represents the voices of 130 families who are social services clients as well as more than 100 Christian agency workers regarding their experiences of either receiving or providing family support services.

Overall interviews for the research involved 249 participants. Families and social service providers from nine locations throughout the country were asked to identify what was working well and not so well in the provision of services. Information was also sought on different types of practice and suggestions from clients on how to improve service delivery.

Poverty was identified as a very significant issue for many of the families that were interviewed. The rising cost of living was keenly felt by both low income working families and families reliant on benefit income. Working for Families provided some relief for some families, as did the income related rents policy for those who were able to live in a HNZC house. A lack of income impacted on many areas of family life, as reflected in the following comments by parents:

*It's either doctors or food.*

*There's no money to pay for [children's] activities, to join a sport team or anything like that.*

*Food's the biggest concern, not being able to give your children milk.*

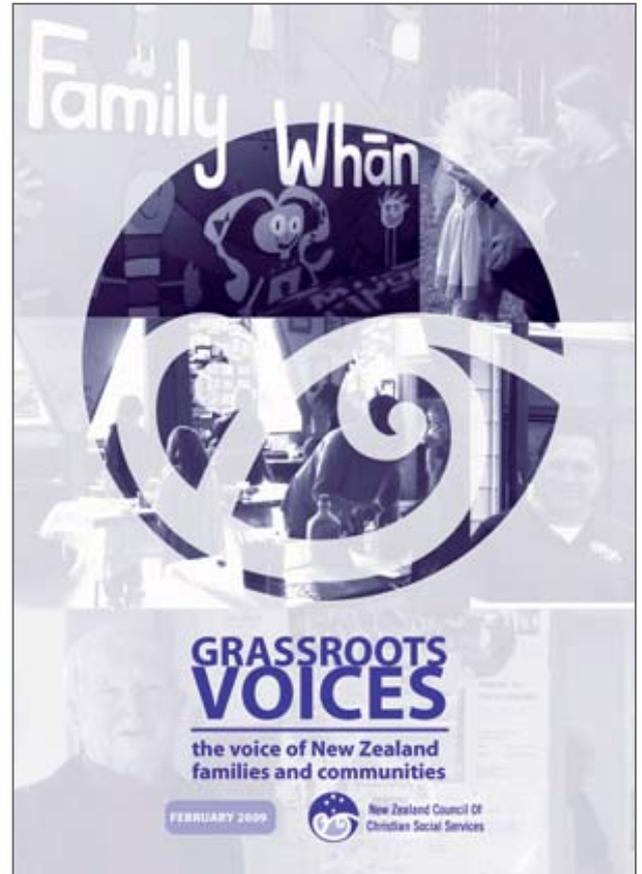
*On my budget there's no way we can have a holiday.*

Comments by social service agencies also highlighted the impact of financial hardship on families:

*Personally I haven't seen people without financial stress (social worker).*

*I would shudder to think at times how many kids come to school underfed (school principal).*

As one social worker commented: “There’s a shame in being poor that is deep and damaging... It’s easy to say support is there, but dealing with agencies



that have that role is not easy, it’s so humiliating for people. This is why it is important to listen to what families tell us about how services can be sensitive to their needs and effective in supporting them through difficult circumstances”. **(Continued page 2)**

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## GRASSROOTS VOICES (continued from page one)

Families were very clear about what is genuinely helpful – being listened to, treated respectfully, being asked to participate in decision making, being kept well informed and wider family involvement where possible, were sentiments expressed by many research participants. Families stressed the importance of knowing that there was someone who they could rely on when they needed help. Agency workers were most effective when they were well connected with other services (government and non government) and were able to mobilise a whole host of resources to wrap around families.

At a higher level, NZCCSS is suggesting that an overarching framework or Family Support Strategy should be developed so that family support services are better integrated across sectors and to ensure that families can access the services they need. This is equally applicable to early intervention services through to crisis and post crisis support services.

A range of policy recommendations were made relating to specific ways the government can respond to issues of poverty, inadequate housing and improve service provision.

The messages and suggestions from families who participated in this research have helped to inform the recommendations made at the meeting of Church leaders reported in this issue of *Kete Kupu*. A full copy of the **Grassroots Voices** report can be found on our website under Publications.

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

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## The Jobs Summit – Our Lens

On the 27th of February the government held a Jobs Summit, calling together approximately 200 people to share ideas on how best to respond to the economic recession in terms of retaining jobs (where possible) and creating new opportunities for employment for those made redundant. Media coverage of the Summit was widespread, with the top 20 ideas going back to officials to consider their feasibility. What was absent from the summit was any comprehensive planning to support those who will lose their jobs, and who will not regain employment in the near future.

The government may well respond that the Restart package was introduced to help newly redundant families cope with some of the financial hardship of losing employment.

Whilst this is true, it is an inadequate buffer, lasting only 16 weeks and available only to some workers. If your savings are too high, your partner in full time work, or if you have not been in continuous employment for the six months prior to being made redundant you will be ineligible. What are the likely outcomes for these people?

Joining the ranks of those dependent on a main benefit is a gloomy prospect given the very low benefit levels in New Zealand. For many losing paid employment also means losing their \$60 per week In Work Tax Credit through Working for Families, although some may keep it for 16 weeks if they qualify for Restart.

Prior to the recession an estimated one in five children in New Zealand lived in poverty. This is about 200,000 children – most of whom lived in families on benefits. In March 2008, 199,000 children were supported by parents on a benefit. This was when unemployment was 3.6%. Already unemployment has risen to 4.6% and is projected to rise to over 7.5% by mid 2010. Numbers of welfare dependent children are likely to increase significantly.

Of great concern also is the disproportionate burden of hardship experienced by Maori children. The Maori average annual unemployment rate at December last year was 9.6%, three times that of the European rate of 3.2%. Of the 200,000 children in benefit dependent households in December 2007, 41% were Maori even though Maori children represented only 25% of the child population.

Pacific families are also vulnerable to the recession. In December 2008 the unemployment rate for Pacific workers was 7.8%, more than twice that of their European counterparts. The average Pacific worker earns \$3.66 less an hour than other workers. With almost 25% of Pacific workers employed in manufacturing many workers are at risk of losing their jobs, as these will be the first to disappear. (Source: Fono looks for Pacific solution to jobs dilemma; Beehive press release 18 Feb 2009, Georgina te Heuheu),

Can families survive on benefit level income? Perhaps the findings of a recent study by Presbyterian Support Otago (*Can we do better? Voices of Poverty Dunedin 2008*) can help to answer this question. A budget focus group was asked to work out how much money was needed to support a 2 adult and 3 child family. They calculated that such a family would require \$872 per week for a minimum standard of living. If this family had benefit only income they would receive \$662, leaving a deficit of \$249. Interestingly, even if one parent was working full time at minimum wage with Working for Families assistance, they would still have a shortfall of \$117.

Given the well known consequences (social and financial costs) of poverty, why is more not being done to protect people from extreme financial hardship? In the current economic climate it is becoming increasingly apparent that it is most useful for us to look at what contribution NZCCSS social services can make in partnership with our network of Churches and parishes, rather than to wait for the Government to take the lead (preoccupied as they are with job retention). This was the focus of the recent meeting of Council and Church leaders on 27 February discussed in the next article.

# Together we can...

A message of hope, a call to maximise the work of Christian social service agencies and their churches and a call for pragmatic government responses to those most affected by the global economic crisis – this is the Church leaders message “Together We Can...” that is contained in an open letter sent to Prime Minister John Key in March.

This followed the February NZCCSS Council meeting which coincided with the government’s Jobs Summit. As part of that meeting NZCCSS had arranged to meet with our Church leaders to discuss how we can best provide support for those most affected by the impacts of the global economic crisis. As a grouping of faith based communities and social service organisations we are one of the largest providers of social services and collectively share an imperative to support families and communities hurting from the recession.

In his comments after the meeting Donald Bell, Territorial Commander-elect of the Salvation Army noted that the Church leaders were “very aware in our meeting of the challenges being set at the same time in Auckland at the Prime Minister’s Summit and, as a group, the message we decided we could best hold out to the people of Aotearoa New Zealand is that together we can look after each other”.

## MESSAGE OF HOPE

Together we can...

- Look after each other
- Support families grow strong and happy children
- Grow healthy communities
- Promote a society that values people and families more than it values monetary wealth and material possessions

Catholic Archbishop John Dew said “We began our collective response to the social impacts of a declining economy more than twelve months



Church leaders met with NZCCSS on 27 February 2009. Pictured from left: John Dew, Catholic Archbishop; Pamela Tankersley, former Moderator - Presbyterian Church; David Moxon, Anglican Archbishop; Jill van de Geer, President - Methodist Church; and Donald Bell, Territorial Commander - Salvation Army. Rodney Macann, Baptist Church could not be present. Along with other Church leaders, he has given his support to engaging further with the government through a scheduled meeting with the Prime Minister. For more details visit [www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz](http://www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz)

ago with a year-long campaign we called “Aroha tētahi ki tētahi - Let Us Look After Each Other”, and from our meeting today we have emerged with a message of hope that “Together We Can.” He went on to say that the meeting with representatives of Christiansocialservicesagencies was about “mobilising our ideas and our commitment to ensuring that in our approach we do not allow economic doom and gloom to overwhelm the strength that we know exists in our communities”.

Pamela Tankersley, former Moderator of the Presbyterian Church noted that “our faith communities are ‘doers’. Every day their work is based in the realities of a society where there is already too much systemic hardship and poverty. As a society we cannot afford for things to get worse, when they could in fact be transformed for the better. As Churches we do not want to be known as the poverty sector, we want to be known as the Hope Sector”.

## MAXIMISING THE WORK OF CHRISTIAN AGENCIES & CHURCHES

Together we can...

- Provide collective leadership to encourage ‘joined up’ Christian social support at local, regional and national levels
- Use Christian media and NZCCSS publications to promote practical and workable ways of getting the best results for families hurt by the recession communities

- Meet together at local and regional levels to decide how parishes, Christian social service agencies, businesses and communities can make the biggest contribution to local needs

Anglican Archbishop David Moxon described the growing recession as a “rallying call for us to do even more to utilise our comprehensive Church networks across the country, in ways that link with existing community resources, such as schools, and other non government organisations. Together we can be more responsible for taking stock of the good work that happens in our parishes and dioceses and promoting that even further.” NZCCSS facilitator Ruby Duncan, of the Baptist Church, said actions raised at the meeting, such as greater coordination of publicity about the availability of services to meet growth in demand, will form a plan of action that will be known as “Together We Can”.

## PRAGMATIC RESPONSES FROM GOVERNMENT

Together we can...

- Work together as community, government and Church organisations to provide support for those New Zealanders most affected by the global economic crisis
- Grow a stronger community more able to look after one another - Aroha tētahi ki tētahi

## CPAG TRIBUNAL DECISION

# In-Work Tax Credit is discriminatory, but that's OK?

by Anne Kelly, NZCCS Policy Advisor

The Child Poverty Action Group NZ has obtained a legal decision confirming the In-Work Tax Credit (IWTC) is discriminatory. This is because children whose parents cannot meet a work test are denied the support needed to keep them out of poverty. The tribunal accepted that "issues of child poverty are real and pressing in New Zealand".

CPAG, represented by the Office of Human Rights Proceedings, has received a decision confirming that **real and substantive discrimination exists in the IWTC**, from the Human Rights Review Tribunal (December 2008). Yet the Tribunal has also decided the discrimination is justified.

At least 200,000 of our poorest children are affected. How can discrimination be justified? In a nutshell, the Tribunal concluded that the overall benefits of the Working for Families package (some of the components of which non working families are eligible) outweigh "the damage that was done to the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of employment".

The Tribunal's report is over 100 pages long and reflects the very technical and long winded nature of the hearing. CPAG needs to be congratulated for their perseverance during a no doubt challenging process. The comprehensive nature of the report means that for those who are interested, a brilliant history of the policy development behind the Working for Families package is given. Most interesting to me was the discussion around the early design of what became the WFF package. Both a two payment and a one payment system were discussed. The latter provided an income adequacy payment only, without a separate work incentive payment (what became the IWTC). Not all Ministers at the time (about 2003) were convinced of the benefits of work incentives. Officials, at short notice then found out that they had much more money at their

disposal than had been forecast (those were the days). The report notes that "by the time officials learned of the extent of the available funding, it was simply too late for them to go back to reconsider the one payment / two payment alternatives... If officials had known the level of funding at the outset they might have made different recommendations for WFF" [Tribunal Report, 16 December 2008: 17]. As a result of the Tribunal's decision CPAG is seeking a meeting with the government asking them to make the IWTC available to all low income families regardless of employment status. CPAG maintains that "this would be the best anti-child poverty, anti-recessionary spending the government could do" [CPAG Press Release, 18 December 2008].

**For a full copy of the Tribunal report visit the CPAG website:** [www.cpag.org.nz/resources/submissions/res1229590397.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.nz/resources/submissions/res1229590397.pdf)

### Into Troubled Waters – 2nd State of the Nation Report – Salvation Army

On Waitangi day the Salvation Army released their second State of the Nation report aptly titled "Into Troubled Waters".

The report offers a progress checklist on a range of social issues including housing, work and incomes, crime and punishment, and social hazards such as gambling, alcohol and drug addiction. Social progress results were found to be mixed, for example housing is becoming slightly more affordable for first homebuyers but there are concerns that progress made in reducing child poverty will slip as the recession impacts and benefit numbers will climb.

**A copy of the report is available on the Salvation Army website:** <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-media/uploads/troubledwaters.pdf>

## Can we do Better?

Late last year Presbyterian Support Otago released its Voices of Poverty report, revisiting issues they explored in an early study in 2002 and 2003. The report found that despite six years of economic growth and the introduction of Working for Families assistance many low income families are still struggling. The 12 month research project involved interviews with 90 participants and six focus groups.



Key points from their Executive Summary:

- The main challenge faced by participants was an acute lack of money, resulting in debt for many families.
- Working for Families has not resulted in a significant improvement in income adequacy for the majority of participants in the study.
- Participants faced significant barriers to entering or returning to the workforce, in particular ill health and caring for children.
- Life on a low income was a daily struggle for participants, worry about money is a constant feature of their lives.

The report makes a range of recommendations to improve incomes (lifting benefit levels, reintroducing a universal child benefit and adjustment benefit abatement levels), improve housing (invest in increasing the supply of HNZC houses and lift the accommodation supplement), improve healthcare and childcare, make power and heating more affordable, manage debt and improve social inclusion. There are strong parallels between the findings in this report and the recently released NZCCSS **Grassroots Voices** research.

See: [www.ps.org.nz/Site/Otago/Library/Default.aspx](http://www.ps.org.nz/Site/Otago/Library/Default.aspx)

## First the Chilli, then the Cookoff



On 4 March a dozen community housing organisations including NZCCSS treated Wellingtonians to a lunchtime chilli cook-off to see who could produce the best chilli. Held in the city's Civic Square, Community Housing Aotearoa (CHA) organised the event to help promote awareness of community housing and hundreds of people enjoyed the sunshine, salsa music and sampled creative chilli concoctions. A celebrity panel including Mayor Kerry Prendergast and Housing Minister Phil Heatley sampled chillis before declaring IHC's Indonesian chilli both the most exotic and best chilli overall. A big thank you to Ingrid Downey and her partner Greg who cooked up and served a most wonderful chilli on behalf of NZCCSS!

The downside to the timing of the event was the earlier news that Housing Innovation Fund (HIF) capacity building funding from Housing NZ Corporation (HNZC) is to be cancelled effective from 30th June this year, which has thrown the future of CHA, as the umbrella organisation for

### Housing and Wealth Inequalities Continue - \$1 billion taxpayer gift to property investors

by Paul Barber, NZCCS Policy Advisor

The end of the house price boom of the past decade has not improved housing affordability for those in the lower half of the housing market. With housing affordability levels back to where they were in 2006 they are still between five or six times the annual average income, well above the international comparative that suggests around three times as being "affordable".

Tax treatment of investment in housing has consistently been identified as one of the key reasons why tens of thousands of investors became rental landlords of small portfolios of rental properties in the past decade. Through being able to deduct rental losses against other income, the taxpayer provided "implicit" tax assistance for providers of rental housing at around \$1.1 billion dollars per year according to the March 2008 report on housing affordability released by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMU).

The DPMU report goes on to report that the various tax advantages for rental property investors compared to owner occupiers can be calculated to translate into those investors being able to pay up to \$37,000 more than a potential home owner who needs a large mortgage to buy the property.

The entry of these many additional buyers into a market for existing properties (research shows that they do not tend to be building new properties) has clearly helped price the

the sector, up in the air because it has been largely funded through this money.

In the four years since its establishment CHA has grown to include more than 170 member organisations throughout the country, providing training, mentoring and organisational support and building a network to help improve the quality of the sector. Housing Minister Phil Heatley has stated that he is "fully supportive of the community housing sector" and is supportive of CHA working towards complementing the policy direction set down by the new Government to achieve "real outcomes for New Zealanders needing housing".

Given the huge need for investment to strengthen third sector housing, it is not sufficient to simply look to the few existing and established community housing organisations none of whom are currently large enough to meet all of the current needs.

There are \$60 million or more in applications before the HIF; the existing investment is simply not sufficient to meet the need for community housing. This would seem to reinforce the need for a peak sector body to help coordinate and focus this work. The draft Community Housing Strategy developed by CHA sets out a pathway for growth and investment that is in stark contrast to job losses and retrenchment happening in the private sector. An estimated 10,000 jobs are at risk in the private sector, a well resourced community housing sector could be one of the avenues for helping to retain and create jobs as well as to meet the huge housing needs facing New Zealand's poorest.

NZCCSS will report on the fate of CHA in the next *Kete Kupu*. If you want to express your support for CHA, we encourage you to contact CHA Director, Therese Quinlivan by email to [director@communityhousing.org.nz](mailto:director@communityhousing.org.nz)

lower income buyers out of the market, particularly first-home buyers. Nothing has changed to the tax rules favouring this behaviour.

The non-taxation of capital gains on providers of rental housing costs the government a further \$1.1 billion but the Minister of Revenue Peter Dunne has categorically ruled out any form of capital gains tax on housing, describing it as "political suicide". This is because we are caught in a 'Catch-22' situation that this country's obsession with investment in home ownership means that there are tens of thousands of voters who benefit from the tax breaks. The implication to take from this is that the tens of thousands who are disadvantaged as a result of these tax policies do not count politically.

It is worth noting that the cumulative \$2.2 billion in tax breaks is in addition to over \$900 million paid in accommodation supplement to low income renters, many of whom are renting from the same landlords receiving the tax benefits.

Even though the housing market is "cooling off" addressing the tax treatment of housing must belong in the debate about making home ownership more accessible for people on low incomes and improving the way the rental housing market works. The technical complexities of the discussion of how to actually effectively, and fairly address the tax discrepancies are significant but the impact on those trying to enter the market is clear. It will take some political courage but it is time to take some action.

## Conferences on Ageing

### Leadership Beyond Borders

Global Ageing Network IAHSA's  
8th International Conference  
20th – 22nd July 2009, London, UK  
[www.iahsa.net/LONDON/index.aspx](http://www.iahsa.net/LONDON/index.aspx)

### International Conference on Ageing and Spirituality: Gender, Culture and Care

Sunday 30th August to Wednesday  
2nd September 2009

University of Auckland Business  
School, Grafton Road, Auckland  
[www.selwyncare.org.nz/?t=139](http://www.selwyncare.org.nz/?t=139)

### Living in An Ageing Society: Shaping Tomorrow Today

Age Concern & NZ Association of  
Gerontology Conference

7th – 9th October 2009

Convention Centre, Wellington

[www.confer.co.nz/ageing2009](http://www.confer.co.nz/ageing2009)

The “Living in an Ageing Society”  
theme includes these strands:

Social Policy / Health and  
Resilience / Care and Participation

Invitation to submit a proposal  
to present at this conference: the  
closing date for abstracts is 5pm on  
Friday 27th March, 2009.

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## Support for Ageing in Place

Our ageing population is creating a dynamic market for a whole range of new products and services specifically focused on the needs and wants of our seniors.

Publicly funded home based support (unlike aged residential care) is not means tested and access to the services is through referral from a District Health Board needs assessment and coordination agency (NASC). There is significant culture change happening in the way such services are delivered.

At the same time paying privately for companionship and non-medical support is one option of older people and their families to consider.

We will explore this topic further In the next issue of *Kete Kupu*.

## SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE NEWS



### Gold Standard Care Framework in New Zealand

We have had a query from a member about aged residential care facilities here in New Zealand who may be working with the UK Gold Standard care framework in palliative care. An introduction to the framework can be found on their website: [www.goldstandardsframework.nhs.uk](http://www.goldstandardsframework.nhs.uk)

Please contact us at NZCCSS if you have experience working with this standard and we will pass on the information. Contact Paul Barber 04 4732627 [paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz)



### Aged Residential Care - additional Government Investment Commitments

The good news amidst the doom and gloom of economic recession and line-by-line reviews of expenditure by all government departments is that Health Minister Tony Ryall is committed to implementing National Party election policy on aged care. Among those promises are committing to ensuring that the Forecast Funding Track (FFT) annual DHB inflation and demographic adjustments are recognised in the annual review of aged residential care (ARC) contracts and additional investment of \$18 million dollars into improving the quality and retention of nursing services in aged residential care. Details of how this funding will be applied will emerge out of the annual ARC contract review process that is currently taking place. Please contact us at NZCCSS if you would like more information about this process.



### Aged Residential Care Service Review and Spot Check Audits

A summary of the new government's intentions for aged residential care is contained in the response the government has issued to the report released in September 2008 by the Health Select Committee on the NZ Nurses Organisation and Service and Food Workers Union 2007 fair pay for the aged care sector petition.

The government fully endorses the aged residential care service review that is proposed by District Health Boards and aged residential care providers. The review will use a comprehensive, multi-year approach to assess future demand for aged residential care services, current pressures, costing models and workforce. DHBs and provider representatives are currently scoping this work as part of the Aged Residential Care Contract Joint Working Groups.

In its response to the Select Committee the government also confirms its intention to proceed with plans to introduce unannounced “spot check” audits for aged residential care facilities and it is intended that the results of audits will be published on the Ministry of Health's website. The timeframe for the implementation of these plans is still uncertain and NZCCSS will update members about this via email as soon as more is known.

The Select Committee report is available on the Parliament website: [www.parliament.nz/en/NZ/SC/Reports/6/c/a/48DBSCH\\_SCR4224\\_1-Petition-2005-108-of-Ann-Galloway-and-33-911-others.htm](http://www.parliament.nz/en/NZ/SC/Reports/6/c/a/48DBSCH_SCR4224_1-Petition-2005-108-of-Ann-Galloway-and-33-911-others.htm). Contact us at NZCCSS if you would like a copy of the government's response to the select committee report.

*Contributed by Paul Barber, NZCCS Policy Advisor*

## LEGAL BRIEFS

### **Enough Protection for Tenants Rights? Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill to be reviewed**

The new government is reviewing the Residential Tenancy Amendment Bill (No.2) that was introduced by the Labour Government in 2008. Housing Minister Phil Heatley commented that he considers the Bill to be “well intentioned” in encouraging stable tenancies and enabling landlords to better manage those tenants, but he wants concerns addressed. Proposals to prevent real estate agents charging letting fees are under review as are additional provisions to deal with assaults or threats of assaults by tenants’ guests or associates, proposals to ensure landlords are not hit with the costs of damage caused by tenants and ensuring that professional advocates are not introduced into the tenancy tribunal process.

There is an urgent need for revised legislation that ensures modern, robust protection for tenants, and the delays caused by this review of the Bill are disappointing. The issues raised by the Minister focus solely on increasing the powers of landlords, yet the balance of power in the private rental market currently rests firmly with the property owners. NZCCSS is taking a particular focus on how the revised Bill will improve protection for vulnerable tenants when the revised Bill is re-introduced into Parliament and referred to Select Committee.

Read more about the Review under [www.dbh.govt.nz/rta-review](http://www.dbh.govt.nz/rta-review)

### **Children Young Persons and their Families Amendment No.6 Bill**

In August 2008 the Social Services Select Committee reported back to government on the Children Young Persons and their Families Amendment (No 6) Bill.

The Bill sought to do a number of things including changing the definition of young people to include 17 year olds, providing more options to deal with youth offending, improving Family Group Conference processes and enabling CYF to refer families to approved community organisations for child and family assessments (also referred to as Differential Response). NZCCSS made

a submission largely in support of the Bill. This Bill was introduced by the Labour led government and it is unclear whether the Bill will become an Act in its current form (that is, with the recommendations from the Social Services Select Committee). At the select committee stage National, NZ First and Act were opposed to parts of the Bill including the clauses to increase the upper age to include 17 year olds. There are some fiscal implications for CYF if the age is lifted that may be unattractive to the government given the economic climate. The Bill has been reinstated by a resolution of the House and awaits its Second Reading. We will keep monitoring the progress of this legislation.

### **Children Young Persons and their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction and Orders) Amendment Bill**

This government Bill was introduced by Paula Bennett on the 18th of February. The Bill changes the CYP&F Act to expand the jurisdiction of Youth Courts and to strengthen and expand the orders available to Youth Courts. The Bill is aimed at the worst 1000 youth offenders.

Expanding the jurisdiction of the Youth Court means making 12 and 13 year olds liable to prosecution for a range of serious offences. Currently with the exception of murder and manslaughter, children under 14 years cannot be prosecuted for offending. Such an amendment, should it become law, would be inconsistent with our obligations as a signatory of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). The UN Committee is urging NZ to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to an internationally acceptable level applicable to all criminal offences. This amendment would be a move in the opposite direction.

Other parts of the Bill focus on giving the Youth Court the power to issue a new range of compulsory orders (parenting, mentoring and A&D rehab programmes) and to create “tougher, more effective sentences”.

The most well known aspect of the Bill is the development of a military style activity camp for the 40 most serious offenders. Whilst the government is referring to the changes as a ‘fresh start for offenders’ opponents have criticised the government for bringing

back ‘boot camps’, an intervention that research has shown to be ineffective. The Bill has been referred to the Social Services Select Committee which is calling for public submissions. The closing date is 17 April. NZCCSS is in the process of preparing a submission.

### **Gangs and Organised Crime Bill**

The purpose of this Bill is to increase penalties for participation in organised criminal groups (gangs) from a maximum of five years to a maximum of ten years, expand police surveillance powers re gang communications and give the police greater powers to remove gang fortifications. This is a government Bill introduced by Simon Power. It passed its first reading on 10 February 2009 and has been referred to the Law and Order Select Committee. Public submissions close on 27 March.

### **Sentencing and Parole Bill**

This is the infamous three strikes bill. The Bill aims to introduce a three stage regime of increasing consequences for the worst repeat violent offenders. It is a government Bill introduced into Parliament by Simon Power on 18th February. The Bill targets repeat violent and sexual offenders and murderers. On the third serious offence an offender will automatically receive a life sentence with a 25 year minimum non parole period. Bishop of Auckland, Patrick Dunne has described the Bill as “cruel and unusual punishment” that has “no place in a humane society”.

John Pratt, a professor of criminology at the Institute of Criminology, Victoria University, argues that this Bill will not reduce crime, that it is unnecessary (because we already have a preventative detention law) and that it may make our prisoners more dangerous. Rethinking Crime and Punishment Director Kim Workman has said “imprisoning people for long periods leaves them scared, violent and without the skills needed to cope. He doubted the policy would provide a deterrent as that had not happened in the United States where it was used. Labour, Greens and the Maori Party are opposed to the Bill. National won’t commit and have supported the Bill to its First Reading as part of an agreement with the ACT Party. After its First Reading it was referred to the Law and Order Select Committee. Public submissions close on April 24th.



## NZCCSS Researchers Network

Social researchers employed by member agencies of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) met together for the first time in December 2008 to discuss ways of working together, sharing research findings and coordinating our areas of research interest. The group will be meeting again in early April to discuss ways in our research efforts can contribute to monitoring the impact of the recession on vulnerable people, and in turn, be used to inform policy development. NZCCSS is keen to hear from more researchers working within its member network - if you are producing social research or know of someone who is please contact Anne Kelly, [anne@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:anne@nzccss.org.nz)

*Pictured above, left to right: Paul Barber (NZCCSS), Lisa Beech (Caritas), Anne Kelly (NZCCSS), Alan Johnson (Salvation Army), Charles Waldegrave (The Family Centre), Mike O'Brien (Massey University - NZCCSS Policy Group member) and Sally Harvey (Presbyterian Support East Coast).*

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## NZCCSS Leadership Changes – New President

After being elected at the November Council meeting we are sad to report that Rev. Michael Greer has had to stand down as President and from his role as Methodist representative on Council due to workload and health reasons.

We are grateful for the commitment and wisdom that Michael demonstrates in his work for Council and in his brief time as President. We look forward to continuing to

work with him on issues through our wider networks and wish him well for the future.

We now welcome Shaun Robinson as the new President of NZCCSS, as decided at the February meeting of the Council. Shaun is CEO of Presbyterian Support East Coast and Convenor of the NZCCSS Child and Family Policy Group. He has been involved in the work of NZCCSS in a number of capacities over many years and he brings a wealth of experience into the role. We also welcome new Council members Ray Gordon from the Salvation Army and John Murray from the Methodist Church. It is with sadness that we farewell David Hanna, of Wesley Community Action, from Council after three years in the role. Our thanks go out to David for his leadership and insight into issues of social justice and social policy.

### **KETE KUPU - Word Basket**

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