



Number 7- November 2009



## A Families Strategy

NZCCSS has been working with its Church Leaders to develop and advocate for an overarching Families Strategy. "A Framework for Strong NZ Families and Whanāu" paper was recently presented to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister with a view to further developing the ideas presented.

In essence, the papers proposed a coordinated strategy that:

1. respects culture and diversity within families
2. creates a strong shared vision and establishes goals for the well-being of all families
3. seeks clear political championing of the concepts
4. provides a practical implementation framework based on:

- accountability for outcomes for families
- co-ordinated individual family plans
- contractual commitment by government agencies to collaborate and support grass roots collaboration.
- the distinctive role of community based agencies in building trust with vulnerable families

Council would like to see a national vision for families that all people who work with families share. We believe that family and whanāu are at the heart of society and that we should all be working towards achieving families and whānau that are strong, skilled and connected to their communities. Strong and healthy families and whānau are able to support their members' well-being, identity, participation in work and education.

The national Family Support Framework seeks to overcome some well known problems in the current provision of family support services. There is a lack

of accountability and coordination in the system from the top down. For example both the Ministries of Education and Health play large roles in the lives of vulnerable children but there is no effective means to ensure that they actively contribute to and collaborate with the Ministry of Social Development in addressing the well-being of children in vulnerable families.

The proposed Family Support Framework would link together the activities of the support agencies by utilising purchasing and contracting agreements, to achieve the overarching vision and goal. Each government department would be required to review their department's performance against the framework.

The ideas that underpin the proposed Family Support Framework are based on feedback from social service agencies who have a long history of supporting families. The framework builds on the findings of research undertaken by the Child and Family Policy Group of Council: most recently the *Grassroots Voices* report (February 2009) and the earlier papers *Is Any Progress being made in the Care and Protection for NZ Children?* (July 2006) and *Towards an Effective System to Support Children, Young People and Families* (July 2004). A critical issue will be to see how the ideas compare to the work that is occurring through Minister Turia's office on Whanāu Ora policy. We anticipate that there will be a lot in common between the two sets of thinking.

The NZCCSS papers are available in the publications section of our website [www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz](http://www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz) Note: Thanks for the photo on this page go to the Mangere Baptist Kids Corner.

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# ACC Reforms

## – playing with numbers

NZCCSS is very concerned about proposed changes to ACC that would make the Scheme more costly (increased levies would disproportionately impact on low income families) and retrenched entitlements (less access for support services, rehabilitation and income support is detrimental to everyone).

Changes in accounting procedures at ACC that move the corporation from a pay-as-you-go model, to a full costing insurance model (similar to the private insurance industry) has led to much publicity and angst regarding the viability and sustainability of the current system (can we afford it now and in the future?). The government favours the full funding model. This means that the lifetime cost of a claim is fully met in the year a claim is made.

So if you have an accident this year that leaves you unable to work for the rest of your working life these costs become part of this year's liabilities even though payments will be spread out over your lifetime. Using this approach is no wonder the books aren't looking healthy.

Some critics are claiming that the ACC crisis has been manufactured and point out that ACC made a profit this year. Others are sceptical about the accuracy of future estimates of costs and suspect a privatisation agenda.

Underlying the debate are two different views on the purpose of the scheme – is it welfare or insurance? Sir Owen Woodhouse who was involved in the development of ACC in the early 1970s sees it as the former. The five principles of the scheme were community responsibility for accidents and supporting accident victims, comprehensive entitlement regardless of what caused the accident, complete rehabilitation, compensation for the whole period of incapacity at 80% of previous earnings and administrative efficiency. (Source: ACC founder blasts 'predatory' changes/ *NZ Herald* 19.10.2009)

If the validity of the need for a full costing model is questionable, then so too is the financial driver for proposed changes to levies and service reductions. A lack of money is being used to justify significant proposed changes e.g. reducing compensation levels from 80%, increasing arbitrary thresholds to access help (e.g. 6% hearing loss), reducing the definition of readiness for full time work from 35 hours to 30 hours etc.

Further public debate on the purpose of the scheme is needed alongside a sensible discussion on what is affordable. This should take place before changes are made that seriously erode what was the first truly comprehensive no-fault accident compensation scheme.

- Sources for further information include the ACC Futures Coalition - see [www.accfutures.org.nz](http://www.accfutures.org.nz)

## Repeal of Housing Affordability Legislation via the “Back door”

A last minute written submission led to a very constructive conversation with the Transport and Industrial Relations Select Committee about housing!! Part 4 of the “omnibus” Infrastructure Bill includes repealing the 2008 Affordable Housing: Enabling Territorial Authorities Act. That Act sought to give local authorities the power to require developers to allocate a proportion of housing in new developments as affordable housing. Repealing the Act is portrayed as the new government's way of reducing unnecessary regulation but NZCCSS pointed out to the committee that removing one legislative tool to help create more affordable housing was not a constructive step. We questioned why a piece of housing legislation was not going through the Social Services Select Committee that usually deals with housing legislation. We were also able to remind members of the committee of the continuing need for more housing, both to rent or for purchase that is affordable for people on low to middle incomes.

The NZCCSS submission is available on our website and the Select Committee is due to report back on 13th November.

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## Legislation & Submissions in the pipeline – watch this space!

Amendments to the Local Government Act may make it onto the government's legislative calendar before Christmas. We will also be following developments in reforms for ACC, Child Support and the Tax System. We are currently preparing a submission on the Law Commission's discussion document Alcohol in Our Lives. NZCCSS is awaiting the following reports from Select Committees on Bills that we have made submissions on:

- Transport and Industrial Relations Committee - Infrastructure Bill – due 13 November
- Social Services Committee – CYF Youth Court and Jurisdictions Bill – due 27 November
- Justice and Electoral Committee – Sentencing and Parole Bill – due 30 November

### Request for annual reports and newsletters

NZCCSS would like to keep as up to date as possible on our members activities. The better informed we are, the better positioned we are to advocate on your behalf. Could members please ensure that NZCCSS is on your mailing list for any publications, particularly Annual Reports? Our contact address for electronic copies is [admin@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:admin@nzccss.org.nz) or post to NZCCSS, PO Box 12 090, Wellington

## REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

# “Working Together We Can Respond to Dementia”

Twelve recommendations arise out of the new NZCCSS report that is now available. NZCCSS is sending the report to key contacts and stakeholders in the sector asking for comments and responses to those recommendations. The NZCCSS presentation at the Gerontology Conference focused on the five broad themes of the report's recommendations which we summarise here.

### Relationality & Culture:

Spirituality is not an optional extra! Simple yet often demanding and challenging expressions of care resonate with spiritual symbolism. This challenges the values systems of our individualistic and rationalistic society.

The long course of the dementia tests our commitment to relationships and challenges our understanding of personhood. It highlights the importance of knowing the person's story and history as communication becomes more difficult. The exponential growth that is expected among older Asian, Pacific as well as Maori living with dementia means that future services must be shaped by those cultures. Such services must be shaped by a community development approach to build services out of the resources and networks of their own communities.

### Create a genuine continuum of services:

There must be a genuine continuum of care that could include dementia-specific home support tailored to needs of people with dementia. Flexible and accessible respite support is essential “there is almost always a second patient... it affects others who in turn influence the manifestations of dementia”. Day programmes and adequate and timely access to residential care

including culturally based units for non-European cultures are needed to meet the growing diversity of older people with dementia, as are supported living options such as the Swedish village cooperative model or intergenerational housing.

### Resources for the task:

The prospect of limited additional public funding for future services gives more urgency to the calls to implement flexible funding models more widely. Workforce training responsibility needs to be shared. Service providers struggle to resource training when the current funding arrangements do not acknowledge the costs of this. Informal as well as paid carers need training – shortages of skilled paid carers and practitioners will continue and resources have to be found to reduce the shortages and help train the informal carers who are left to cover the gaps.

### Strategy:

Dementia needs a public campaign to help de-stigmatise the condition. As one carer said “my wife is not mad... Sarah is ill and she needs to be cared for properly”. Is the language of epidemic really helpful? Dementia is not contagious! There is a constant plea in most service areas to

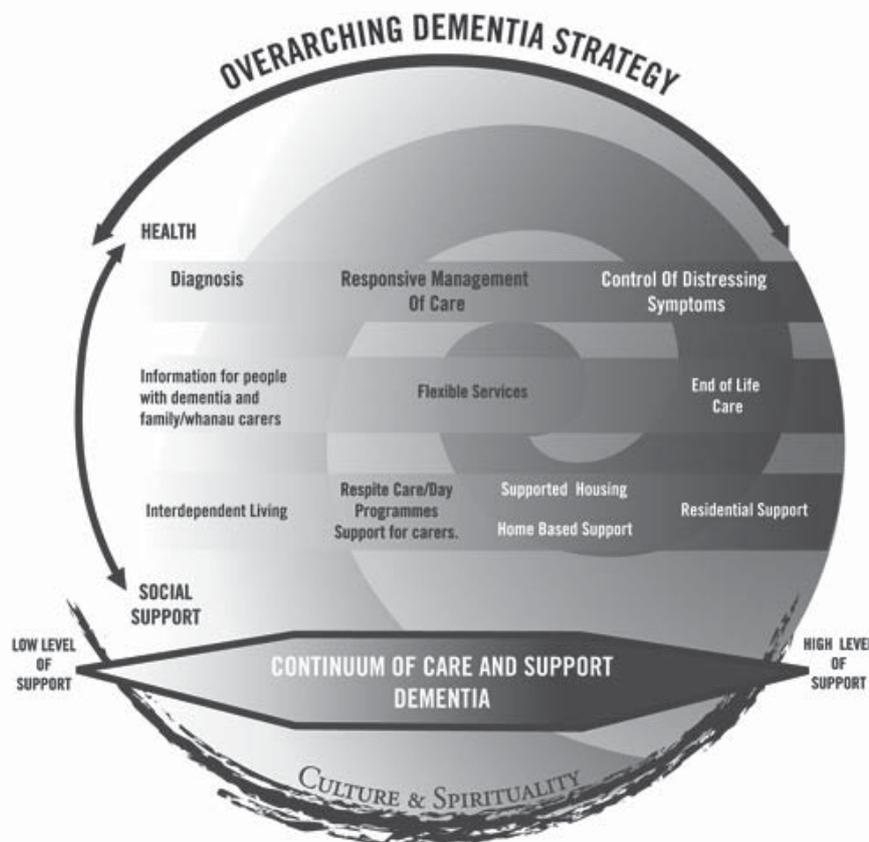
co-ordinate service. We ask if the ElderCare Canterbury is a model for other regions?

We support the call of Alzheimers NZ for an overarching dementia strategy that guides future planning. We may question the success of other strategies, yet without the attempt to develop a strategy how can we possibly work together nationally and regionally towards some shared goals?

### Research:

More research is needed to evaluate effectiveness of day programmes & dementia specific home support, as well as tangata whenua led research into mate wareware, and research into effective supported living models.

As reported in the last issue of *Kete Kupu* the full report is online on our website: [www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz](http://www.justiceandcompassion.org.nz)





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## “A stunning success” - Gerontology Conference

Robots, morals & markets, intergenerational living, dementia and an optimistic note about ageing populations – these are some of the gleanings from the extensive programme of the recent Age Concern & Association of Gerontology Conference in Wellington. It was described by its organisers as a “stunning success”. More than 400 people attended the gathering that created a stimulating mix of academic, practice-based and consumer advocacy sessions.

**Longer and healthier lives.** Professor Alan Walker from the United Kingdom celebrated the amazing social achievement of our ageing populations. He pointed out that infectious diseases have been brought under control and the health challenges of the future come from non-contagious conditions such as heart disease, cancer and dementia. The evidence is also clear that we are staying healthier for longer. The average length of disability affected life is not increasing but is occurring at an older age.

**Morals and markets in collision.** Massey University ethics lecturer Martin Woods issued a ringing challenge to the individualised, market-based ethics that have gained dominance in our society over recent decades. In his analysis applied to aged residential care, this has led to individual practitioners (nurses, careworkers, managers) being held accountable for systemic problems. Lack of funding, ineffective regulation and a dominant market ethos in service provision does not create an environment where an ethic of care can flourish.

**Robots in aged care.** Researcher Priyadarshi Tiwari gave an overview of how information technology and robotics are creating new forms of assistive technology. He emphasised that technology should only ever be seen as assisting and not replacing human care. Internet and mobile based support, telecare (such as remote monitoring), ambient sensing and robotics are four categories of assistive technology advance. He emphasised that future care models will be even more strongly technology driven as the rapid IT technology development continues. The challenge is to manage this development in a person-centred way, ensuring that there is an appropriate balance between the autonomy, empowerment and privacy of the older person and the need to achieve good care outcomes and manage costs.

**Intergenerational Living.** There is a lack of genuine accommodation options for older people in New Zealand. Age Concern Auckland is promoting models intergenerational living as a way to provide older people with more choices as they age. Based on models from Germany, Denmark and Sweden, communities of around 60 people of mixed age live in their own apartments or houses but share communal space (e.g. a community lounge & kitchen, gardens) and seek to support each other. Older people can act as carers and supporters for young families seeking grandparent figures. In turn older people receive social support and some limited care support through the relationships established in the community.

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### UPDATE:

#### Spot audits, online audit reports and other changes

The Ministry of Health is now well into its programme of responses to the challenge of a more proactive monitoring of quality in the aged residential care sector. Never mind the home based support sector – it doesn't even have compulsory standards yet, although the sector has been calling for the Ministry to make them compulsory for some time now!

Aged residential care is in the spotlight - or should that be spot-audit? Beginning in October several District Health Boards are trialling a spot audit process with a number of agencies that volunteered to be test cases.

The Ministry must be doing something right this time, because the announcement of the spot audit trial was greeted with approval by consumer, union and provider organisations (when was the last time this happened?).

“A damned good idea!” said Les Howard from Grey Power, and in a rare show of unanimity the NZ Aged Care Association (aka HealthCare Providers NZ), the NZ Nurses Organisation and Grey Power all claimed to have been promoting the idea for a number of years!

Basking in the thought of such unified support, Health Minister Tony Ryall promised that the two month trial will be followed by a national roll-out starting in January. In a recent speech he also noted that the Government is seriously considering the recommendation of the “Horn Report” that an independent national quality agency be established to build on the work of the Quality Improvement Committee.

UPDATE:

## Online Certification Audit Summaries

For several months now the Ministry of Health has been posting summaries of aged residential care facilities certification audits in their website [www.moh.govt.nz/certification](http://www.moh.govt.nz/certification). NZCCSS has sought some feedback from members on the usefulness of these documents and their potential impact.

The available summaries provide limited and summarised information. While this is probably better than nothing, the question has to be asked valuable they will be to clients and their families in the form they have been made available and how accurate a picture they give of the actual situation of the facility.

There will have to be some process to allow changes to the reports when matters raised in the reports have been addressed, because certification lasts up to three or even four years. The colour coding approach is a simple basis for comparison but the written commentaries vary in length from one paragraph to nearly two pages and vary considerable in how informative they are.

NZCCSS has not been invited to be part of the group of consumer, provider and audit representatives that negotiated the process of posting these summaries but we would like to give the Ministry feedback from our sector, so please contact us if you have any comments ([paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz)).

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## Independent Review of Careerforce

Careerforce, the health and disability sector Industry Training Organisation (ITO), has announced that it is has commissioned consultancy firm Deloitte to undertake an independent review of Careerforce governance. This three month review will begin in late October and will canvas the views of sector employers through face to face discussion and questionnaire. A key event informing this review is a CEO consultation in early November involving Careerforce shareholders, sector CEOs and members of the Careerforce Board.

This is one of the actions Careerforce is taking in response to the decision by the Minister of Tertiary Education in September to grant only a limited re-recognition of 12 months. The Minister has requested that Careerforce review its governance and provide more evidence of the support it receives from the sector. Strong lobbying from some parts of the aged residential care sector for a separate ITO has been the background for this decision. NZCCSS supports the moves to address the dissatisfaction of some aged residential care providers with governance arrangements and it is to be hoped that the review will



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ensure that the entire services for older people sector will continue to build modern and flexible training that serves the full continuum of care and support for older people.

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## Residential Aged care Training – Flexible Pathways to the Same Goal

An agreement signed in September between Careerforce and the Health Education Trust will help reassure residential aged care providers that the much-valued ACE resources they use continue to be fully recognised.

The agreement clearly demonstrates that employers and their employees can choose which resources they would like to use i.e. either the ACE resources or those provided by Careerforce. Trainees can gain unit standards and national certificates by using Health Education Trust resources or the Careerforce resources or a combination of both. This gives trainees maximum flexibility if they move between workplaces and increases their options for completing national qualifications.

Both sets of resources lead to the same outcome, the National Certificate Core Competencies Level 3 and the National Certificate Residential Level 3 which collectively replace the expiring National Certificate in Support of the Older Person Level 3.

## NZCCSS PROJECT

# Manaaki Hapori - Enhancing Communities

When Sister Loyola, from the Home of Compassion, exclaimed that community gardens are popping up like pumpkins she was giving a delighted response to news of people coming together to grow veges in plots on church land all over the country.

The pumpkin image could be used for more than community gardens. Through Manaaki Hapori - Enhancing Communities the NZCCSS co-ordinator, Betsan Martin is visiting parish or church based community initiatives. Our first round of visits to parishes has shown all sorts of substantial programmes being led by church people in communities.

The breadth of activities shows responses to different needs in different communities. Community gardens often come from people living in rented housing without land, so church people have seen the opportunity to provide the first step by making land available.

One garden is linked to a children's day care centre run by a church, for children who might not get to pre-school. Fees are kept low because the church provides the facilities at low rent.

As well as having trained child care workers, social workers are employed there to bring other social support to the families. A community garden has been started with parents of the children at the centre and brings the chance to learn about growing food as well as to have fresh supplies of veggies.

A monthly market was one innovation in a city church community. After a social justice workshop and community needs analysis parish members started up the first stalls in the hall. A core group have kept the market on its feet and now regular stall holders provide fresh produce, ethnic foods, baking and clothes.

The market is a venue to highlight important issues such as the 350° campaign on climate change ([www.350.org](http://www.350.org)); and some try their hand at selling zany wares – such as toy animals with knitted body organs (heart, lungs, liver, colon etc) inside!

One of the biggest challenges that people spoke about repeatedly during the *Grassroots Voices* research was the need for activities for teenagers. Some churches bring the opportunity for young people to be inspired spiritually as well as to be involved with their communities.

A church in Mangere hosts the City Lights program. This brings together young people willing to contribute and families who would like help in different ways.

One team went to the home of a newly arrived family from Somalia – with six children. After initial family reserve, the children were keen to hear more about facilities in Mangere, and the team helped the family with English.



*Sister Loyola (centre) with community gardener Sam and Betsan Martin of NZCCSS. Below: Geraldine from St Lukes Masterton Community Garden.*



Another group fixed holes in the house of a family of teenage boys. The boys' threats to make more holes were responded to with offers to teach the boys to use the tools. The visit turned into a few weekends of teaching the boys some basic building skills.

Budgeting with a difference is a feature of community support. One formidable Samoan budgeter has stopped 34 mortgagee sales (out of the 35 referred to her) since June. A significant co-ordination role for a Pacific Island peoples' health programme in Auckland is a collaboration between churches and a DHB.

The earthquake and tsunami in Samoa has drawn local congregations together in Masterton. In one case an offer of a container and transport from the Mayor meant supplies have been sent to villages which were damaged and destroyed.

We will be posting stories of parishes at work in their communities on our website. There will be short 'You Tube' style videos as well, to show a few moments of the varied stories we are hearing of brilliant ideas for enhancing communities.

**If you have a story to tell, resources to share, or would like to link up with any of those leading these activities, please contact Betsan Martin at (04) 473-2627 or [betsan@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:betsan@nzccss.org.nz)**



*From top to bottom: Vai, budget advisor extraordinaire!; Angela, St Lukes Childcare Director; City Lights and Baptist Mangere; Simon at the Newtown Community Market.*

## *Post GDP:* **GPI (Genuine Progress Indicator) as a responsible measure of the economy inclusive of environmental and social health**

- *Betsan Martin and Simon Harding reflect on a seminar given by Ron Coleman and hosted by Anew-New Zealand, Sept 28th 2009.*

The Genuine Progress Indicator is an alternative measure to the predominant indicator of economic activity, the GDP (Gross Domestic Product). GDP is a measure of productivity from the exchange of goods and services nationally.

GDP is a measure of financial exchange and does not take account of environmental or social wellbeing. It is closely tied to the imperative of growth as an indicator of a healthy economy. GDP is therefore cited as a measure of economic performance, and with few notable exceptions, governments the world over unquestionably aspire to an ever increasing rates of GDP. In analysing GDP we could ask 'does a higher GDP really equate to a better life for citizens?'

There are a number of ironies associated with GDP and one can point to circumstances in which the measure is ineffective for reflecting wellbeing. If, for example, a major earthquake flattens Wellington, the reconstruction effort to rebuild things that had previously existed will cause GDP to rise.

Coleman gave an example that if someone marries their housekeeper this would cause GDP to fall because the housework becomes no longer 'paid' work; GDP favours low quality throw-away goods over durable items because more purchases will cause GDP to grow; war will cause GDP to rise because of increased production and sale of arms and supplies to sustain the war effort.

GDP only measures the monetary value attributed to final goods and services. It fails to account for roles of parenting and of significant voluntary contributions made to society. It does not ask if production is meaningful and does not properly reflect the quality of goods manufactured. It also ignores resource depletion and the environmental consequences of 'economic growth' and thus encourages the use of resources at unsustainable levels. The question must be asked, do we really want policy makers to continue to gauge economic 'progress' against such a clearly inadequate measure?

The Genuine Progress Indicator/Index (GPI) is a more responsible measure in that it identifies the true costs and benefits of societal activity in social, environmental, cultural and economic terms. Sustainable development is a core guiding principle and the model attempts to more accurately link economic activity to wellbeing.

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While the Ministry of Economic Development has showed some interest in GPI, and the Maori Party have adopted it as a framework for economic accounting, it is local authorities who are leading New Zealand towards the use of more meaningful progress indicators. The Greater Wellington and Auckland Regional Councils have already adopted a form of the framework and the Marlborough and Tasman District Councils are considering its use.

Although alternatives to GDP are gaining visibility globally, the deficient GDP measure remains much of the world's primary economic benchmark. The existing recession and the environmental ramifications of human-created climate change remind us of the consequences of our contemporary economic system. Substituting GDP with a genuine indicator of progress is surely a critical component to enduring structural change.

If you would also like to see New Zealand advance the adoption of GDP alternatives, you could:

- Contact government and local authorities urging them to consider the benefits of genuine progress indicators. In particular, you may wish to contact:
  - o Prime Minister John Key
  - o Minister of Economic Development Gerry Brownlee
  - o Minister for the Environment Nick Smith
  - o Minister for Maori Affairs Pita Sharples
  - o Minister for Local Government Rodney Hide
  - o The Ministry of Social Development
  - o The Ministry of Economic Development
  - o The Ministry for the Environment
  - o The Reserve Bank
  - o Treasury
  - o Te Puni Kokiri
- Write to your local Newspaper and initiate dialog on the issue
- Contact your local council encouraging them to consider the benefits of genuine progress indicators
- Write to the Wellington and Auckland Regional Council's congratulating them for their forward thinking in adopting the use of GPI
- If you're involved in the governance of an organisation, consider adopting a GPI approach to measuring progress
- Contact political parties urging them to publically commit to a more meaningful and sustainable progress indicator
- Get involved with groups already working to promote GPI in New Zealand such as AnewNZ ([www.anewnz.org.nz](http://www.anewnz.org.nz)), Transition Towns ([www.transitiontowns.org.nz](http://www.transitiontowns.org.nz)) or The New Zealand Centre for Ecological Economics ([www.nzcee.org.nz](http://www.nzcee.org.nz))

## Review of Local Govt Act and its community implications

• *By Anne Kelly, NZCCSS Policy Advisor*

As many of you will be aware, the Minister of Local Government (and for Regulatory Reform), Rodney Hide has started a review into the 'transparency, accountability and fiscal management of local government'. He is also head of a new taskforce 'to carry forward work on the Regulatory Responsibility Bill' which aims to 'reduce the red tape and regulatory interventions that are reducing investment and depriving New Zealanders of job'. [Source: National-Act Confidence & Supply Agreement, 16 November 2008]

According to a Cabinet paper to the Economic Growth and Infrastructure Committee (6 April 2009) the Local Government Act (2002) needs to be reviewed "to ensure that ratepayers and citizens have better tools for controlling costs, rates and activities". The Minister is concerned that rates are too high and this is a result of overly bureaucratic compliance costs and local authorities being involved in activities that are outside of core business. In fact, a focus on 'core activities' is one of the review's guiding principles and should be read as 'reducing what services council offer'.

What are core council activities? There is no formal definition but the paper describes these as generally understood to include: transport (roads, footpaths and public transport), water services (water supply, sewage treatment, storm-water and flood protection) public health and safety services (refuse collection and regulation of nuisances). Quite telling, is the complete absence of any reference to affordable housing, public amenities (libraries, swimming pools, parks etc), activities which promote social cohesion (such as community centres, community patrols), activities to promote effective relationships between councils and tangata whenua, or activities to meet the needs of youth, Pacific peoples and other special interest groups.

The Minister has noted that 'councils can be pressured to expand their services by providing services that benefit a limited number of people but for which the whole community is 'required to pay'. This he says, raises equity issues as 'some beneficiaries of the service 'free ride' on other rate payers'. Such a perspective is dangerous as it gives preference to majorities. Local authorities need to be able to provide services that not everyone needs - for example disability support, help for new migrants and subsidies for low income people so they can participate in the community. A user pays ethos undermines this valuable work and reduces local government to 'road, rates, and rubbish bags'. Surely we can do better than this?

### What else is under review?

The Minister would like to simplify long term council community plans and give them 'a more strategic focus'.

The moves to make these plans shorter and clearer is not necessarily bad, however it is unclear what is meant by 'more strategic'. It could mean less focus on things outside of core services. The existing Local Government Act also requires councils to identify social, economic, environmental and cultural community outcomes. The Minister wants this role reviewed as it is expensive and takes the focus away from the frontline. In order to make Councils financial activities more understandable the review is looking at plain English financial reports and mechanisms to make comparisons across councils. The Minister is also keen on the use of polls and referenda to ensure ratepayers are engaged in decisions related to council expenditure

It is concerning that the Cabinet paper of April "notes that no public discussion document is proposed on these proposals, as public views are well known" – pretty ironic given the review is about improving 'transparency' and 'citizens' participation in decision making! Also worrisome was the preceding note that 'in the course of this review, other minor changes to the Act that will advance the government's policy agenda, or lower government compliance costs, may be identified' – and presumably acted upon. In Section 32 of the April Cabinet paper the example given of a minor change is a review of 'constraints on the use of the private sector to deliver local government services'. This is not a minor issue and is a way to slip privatising of public amenities through the backdoor. It is ACT's policy that 'local government will be required to shed its commercial activity' and that 'roads and piped water will be supplied on a fully commercial basis'. Ouch! I think the public would be interested in being consulted on this.

### What next?

The Minister is to consult with Local Government NZ and the Society for Local Government Managers on the development of policy options. Alas the public is deemed to have insufficient technical expertise to be involved in this. The public will be able to make submissions once an amended bill goes to Parliament. The aim is to get it on the 2009 Legislative Programme which means trying to rush it in before Christmas. We would urge readers to talk to their local MPs about their concerns and be prepared to make a submission at short notice.

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## TAX WORKING PARTY CONSIDER OPTIONS FOR REFORM

The government is concerned that the current tax system in NZ isn't well placed in the international economy. It needs to be reformed, we are told, because our corporate and personal tax rates are too high discouraging economic growth and leaving us vulnerable to both skills and investment going offshore. The government is particularly sensitive to the impending reforms of the Australian tax system - the Henry Review.

A Tax Working Group (TWG) was established in May to assist government in exploring tax reform options in the medium term and providing advice to Ministers. The TWG has met four times already and will next meet in early December for a one day conference. A finalised report will be presented to Ministers in mid December after the conference. The TWG - which includes officials from Treasury, IRD and academic tax specialists from various universities and the private sector, now also includes Susan St John and Peter Conway - has agreed to six principles to guide the design of the tax system, these include: growth and efficiency, equity and fairness, revenue adequacy (raising enough money for government spending), revenue integrity (sustainable and minimises tax avoidance), simplicity (in administration and compliance) and coherence (all parts of the system adhere to the same principles). NZCCSS has been following the discussions of various tax options by the TWG through the papers released on its website ([www.victoria.ac.nz/sacl/cagtr/twg/session-four.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacl/cagtr/twg/session-four.aspx)). The TWG has been asked to consider a broad range of options. The merits and pitfalls of three tax options are discussed below.

**Raising GST:** The TWG has discussed the raising of GST to 15%, 17.5% and 20%, an option considered to be efficient but acknowledged to be harmful to low income people, particularly in the short term. The TWG the group noted that "compensation for those on lower incomes should be considered". They were not supportive of exemptions (e.g. for food) because it would "be costly, inefficient and ineffective in addressing distributional concerns". NZCCSS has argued that there are better ways to improve income adequacy than GST exemptions.

**Introducing a Capital Gains Tax (CGT):** Almost all OECD countries have some form of capital gains tax. It is argued that NZ's lack of a CGT distorts savings and investment decisions into relatively non-productive assets (primarily housing). In a nutshell, people put their money where it generates the least tax. Some countries exempt the family home from CGT, this however, diminishes the amount of money that can be generated. It is widely accepted that the absence of the CGT in NZ raises significant equity issues. In essence our lack of CGT favours the rich. Higher income people tend to own property assets and they currently reap the benefits of untaxed capital gains. The introduction of a capital gains tax would help to redress this imbalance. NZCCSS would be keen to find out more about the implications of introducing a CGT and its ability to make the system fairer.

**Land and Property Taxes:** Similar to the situation with CGT NZ is unusual in its absence of either land or property taxes. A land tax is a levy calculated on the value of the land and usually paid annually. A property tax is levy which includes the value of the land and the buildings on it.

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Tax specialists view land and property taxes as efficient, administrative simple and effective in raising revenue. Officials argue that property taxes would put landowners off investing in land improvements, push up rental costs and housing costs for home owners and reduce investment in housing. Land taxes are viewed more favourable. However land taxes cause hardship for those who have land but not cash-flow e.g. those on lower incomes who own their own homes – such as retirees. This would be of concern to NZCCSS given recent research has shown that nearly half of older New Zealanders live on NZ Super plus \$5000 or less per annum and a third had no assets except the family home.

The TWG next meets again on 1 December for their one day conference. NZCCSS will continue to monitor developments.

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## Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill – Select Committee makes a few changes

The report of the Social Services Select Committee on the Residential Tenancies Amendment (RTA) Bill was released on the 25th September and contains a few positive changes to the Bill. It is a majority report with the Labour Party adding its own minority report. While NZCCSS believes the Bill will undoubtedly improve the working of the rental market, more could still have been done to provide further protection for vulnerable tenants. Significant changes recommended by the committee include:

**Cleansing Orders:** Deleting the Bill's requirement on landlords to disclose whether a house has been subject to a cleansing order (e.g. if it has been contaminated by been using as a "P lab").

**Letting Fees:** Instead of banning the charging of letting fees, the committee recommends allowing all letting agents to charge fees.

**Retirement Villages:** the committee has recommended that the RTA mirrors the Retirement Villages (RV) Act by including a specific provision stating that all occupation rights agreements covered by the RV Act are excluded from coverage by the RTA. This therefore means any person renting a unit in a retirement village would be covered by the RTA.

**Camping Grounds and Emergency Housing:** The committee has recommended that the RTA clarify that temporary or transient accommodation be clearly excluded from the legislation. In camping grounds this would be stays of up to 50 days, while refuges and emergency housing it is 28 days.

Boarding Houses: Slight improvements have been recommended for protect boarding house tenants such as requiring landlords to give notice of any rent arrears and at least 10 days to rectify this.

**Anti-social tenants:** The Select Committee did not change the Bill's clauses that allow eviction of tenants who allow or permit someone else to assault or threaten to assault specified persons (e.g. landlords or their family). The committee believes that the Tenancy Tribunal could not terminate a tenancy without having evidence that is proved to "an almost criminal standard".

**Representation at Tenancy Tribunal:** Given the high standard of proof being required from the Tribunal, it is disappointing that the committee has not recommended any changes to the threshold of claims for an automatic right to representation. This has been raised to \$6,000 in the Bill which NZCCSS and others believe will increase the risk of tenants being treated unfairly when dealing with experienced landlords and their advocates.

The report is online on the Parliament website:

[www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/Documents/Reports/](http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/SC/Documents/Reports/)

## CONFERENCES & EVENTS

### What the Liquor Industry Doesn't Tell us About Alcohol - Alcohol Action NZ

Professor Doug Sellman, expert in psychiatry and addiction is speaking at a series of public meetings throughout the country during September through to November.

See [www.alcoholaction.co.nz](http://www.alcoholaction.co.nz) for the details of venues and dates.

### 20th ASIA PACIFIC SOCIAL WORK CONFERENCE

Date: 11 - 13 November 2009

Venue: Sky City Auckland Convention Centre, Auckland, To register: [www.swinnz2009.co.nz](http://www.swinnz2009.co.nz)

The New Zealand Bioethics Centre in association with the Health Research Council of New Zealand presents **The New Zealand Bioethics Conference: Ethics After Harm** Salmond College, Dunedin, 29-31 January 2010  
To register: [www.otago.ac.nz/nzbioethicsconference/registration.html](http://www.otago.ac.nz/nzbioethicsconference/registration.html)

### Evolving Communities Beyond Services

The Building Bridges Trust fifth conference, Wellington from 14-16 April 2010.

To register: [www.buildingbridges.co.nz/Site/Building\\_Bridges\\_Trust/registration.aspx](http://www.buildingbridges.co.nz/Site/Building_Bridges_Trust/registration.aspx)

# “Together We Can...”

## NZCCSS CONFERENCE 2010

### Auckland 22-23 April 2010

The conference theme “Together We Can...” is a call for us to build cooperation in the sector and a vision of working together with older people to make a difference in their lives and the lives of those around them.

The conference will include leading speakers invited to give fresh perspectives on national and international issues affecting older people and their services, and also smaller, interactive workshop presentations and opportunities to network and socialise with others working in the sector.

This is a unique event in the sector and brings together NZCCSS member agencies and other organisations from across the whole sector: aged residential care, home and community based support services and retirement housing.

Our conference is a place where Board members, CEOs and managers can work on the significant strategic and managerial issues in the sector informed by the perspective of our network of faith-based social service organisations and a commitment to just and compassionate responses to the needs of older people.

We invite you to join us for these two days to support the theme “Together We Can...”

### Keynote Speaker – Dynamic Leadership/ Sandra Hills - Victoria, Australia

Sandra is CEO of Benetas, one of Victoria’s largest not-for-profit aged care service providers. She has more than two decades of experience in the health and community sector and in government.

She is a Director of the industry organisation Aged and Community Care Victoria, a member of the Department of Health and Ageing’s Aged Care Consultative Committee.



Benetas is an Anglican not-for-profit organisation providing aged residential care, community support services and is also one of the leading providers of dedicated day and overnight respite services in Victoria.

#### For more information contact:

Conference Organiser Pat Johnston, DCMS  
(03) 477 1377 pat@dcms.co.nz www.dcms.co.nz  
OR Paul Barber NZCCSS (04) 4732627  
paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz

## A Guide for Carers - He Aratohu mā ngā Kaitiaki

We highly recommend a great new booklet, the practical and easy to read “Guide for Carers” that has just been released. It gives practical advice for people caring for family or friends who are older or have ill health, a disability or a mental health, alcohol or other drug issue.

Carers New Zealand, The New Zealand Carers Alliance and the Ministry of Social Development have collaborated in producing the booklet that includes information on the government-funded services and supports available for carers, such as:



- financial help
- needs assessments (NASC)
- help at home
- help if you need a break
- help related to children with special education needs
- health and disability rights
- equipment and modifications.

Hard copies can be obtained by phoning Work and Income 0800 559 00 and the booklet is also available online at [www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/carers/index.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/what-we-can-do/community/carers/index.html)

### Help now!

*We got caught out when my husband lost his job. Our budget adviser was a really good listener, they explained things clearly. We really felt they had our best interests at heart. We now feel much more confident managing our money...*

Does this sound like an area of community service you're interested in? Family Budgeting is currently recruiting volunteers to train as budget advisers to work with families and individuals to help them better manage their money.

To talk about this opportunity  
Phone 0508 BUDGETLINE (0508 283 438)  
Training begins in February/March 2010



## Minimum Rental Housing Standards

### - A Biblical and Social Imperative?

The evidence that connects the poor quality of the housing in New Zealand with poor health and social outcomes is strong. For example, the NZ Business Council for Sustainable Development calculated that an average 50 people per day are admitted to hospital because of illness caused by unhealthy homes and 180,000 work days per year are lost through illness because of poor housing.

The Otago Medical School He Kainga Oranga Housing & Health programme is researching and documenting some of the health impacts of poor quality housing such as the impact of improved insulation on the health of families.

The Bible contains many clear messages that condemn exploitation and unjust treatment of the poor and the vulnerable. The prophet Hosea condemns the “trader, in whose hands are false balances, he loves to oppress.” (Hosea 12:7). We are urged to love our neighbour as ourselves yet when it comes to rental housing, in this country it is often our neighbours who are left to fend for themselves in a rental market.

There is both a moral and social imperative to improve the quality of rental housing in this country. For some years now the Manawatu Tenants Union has been calling for a certificate of fitness for rental housing to be a requirement before a house can be rented out.

The Residential Tenancies Act requires rental houses to be maintained to an acceptable standard but the enforcement relies on tenant complaints. It is unlikely that the most vulnerable tenants will wish to risk their tenancy or have the resources to pursue such complaints.

There are various tools available or being developed that help to measure housing health and safety that could be applied to developing a system for rating rental housing quality. The Healthy Housing Index being developed by the He Kainga Oranga Housing & Health team is designed for the New Zealand



context. The Presbyterian Support Otago survey of private rental housing quality in 2004 developed the “Dunedin Reasonable Rental Standard”. Houses were measured against four aspects of housing:

- Property is free of hazards
- Provides complete shelter
- Provides basic amenities that encourage social inclusion
- Rental cost is value for money

Perhaps a star rating system such as used for energy efficiency of appliances could be applied to rental houses? In the absence of compulsory standards, landlords could be encouraged to sign up to a voluntary standard and allow their properties to be assessed against recognised criteria that are based on strong evidence.

We welcome the thoughts of those involved in the rental housing market about the impacts and practicalities (including costs!) of such standards. Contact Paul Barber [paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:paul.barber@nzccss.org.nz)

#### KETE KUPU - Word Basket

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