



Briefing for the Incoming Minister – Summary:

Ministry of Social Development

*The following is a summary prepared by the NZCCSS Secretariat of the Briefing for the Incoming Minister. The document itself is available at [www.msd.govt.nz/publications/briefing-papers.html](http://www.msd.govt.nz/publications/briefing-papers.html)*

*NZCCSS has provided this as a summary of the documents. It is not intended to critique or comment upon the policies or initiatives contained in the agency's Briefing to the Incoming Minister, but simply to give an overview of some of the major issues covered in the agency's briefing papers.*

*Areas of interest for the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) are children and families, housing and poverty and services for older people. This summary outlines the intentions of the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) in the next three years, and pays particular attention to areas of concern for NZCCSS.*

**The broad focus of MSD** is to build an “inclusive New Zealand where all people are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities”<sup>1</sup> and “achieve better social outcomes for all New Zealanders”<sup>2</sup>

MSD believes it is important to look at the whole social sector from a “strategic, cross-sectoral viewpoint.”<sup>3</sup>

- Social outcomes are important for New Zealand's social and economic development
- MSD implements policies to enhance social development through social protection and social investment.
- **Social protection** ‘provides a safety net for people facing difficulties.’<sup>4</sup> An example of social protection is housing assistance or income support. **Social investment** ‘provides the foundation for positive outcomes in the future.’<sup>5</sup> An example of social investment is investment in educational under-achievement to prevent longer term problems.
- 78% of total government expenditure on 2004/05 was social spending, 73% of that was on social protection.
- One of the main recommendations made by MSD is the need for a stronger focus on social investment, which is to address causes before they become an issue.<sup>6</sup>

MSD has measured the social well-being of New Zealanders in 2004-05 through 22 different social indicators;<sup>7</sup> sixteen of the 22 have shown improvement in the past ten years.

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<sup>1</sup> *Leading Social Development: Statement of Intent 2005/06*, Ministry of Social Development, 2005, p.10

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.6

<sup>3</sup> , p.1

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.19

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.3

<sup>7</sup> These social indicators include such things as; obesity, participation in education, educational attainment, unemployment, suicide, perceived corruption and representation of women in Parliament. A full list can be found in *Leading Social development in New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005.

## **Children and Families:**

### **Areas of concern**

- The structure of New Zealand families has changed with more sole parents and increasing numbers of families where both parents work<sup>8</sup>.
- New Zealand has the second-highest level of sole parent families in the OECD<sup>9</sup>.
- New Zealand sole parents have one of the highest unemployment rates in the OECD<sup>10</sup>.
- Maori and Pacific children are more likely to live in sole parent families.
- 83% of sole-parent families are headed by women.
- Sole-parent mothers are less likely than partnered mothers to have qualifications.
- Sole parent families are more susceptible to poverty and hardship.
- Nearly one third of New Zealand children are overweight or obese<sup>11</sup> and children and young people's participation in activity is decreasing<sup>12</sup>.
- From the mid to late 1980s child deaths due to intentional injury almost doubled, this has remained unchanged since<sup>13</sup>.

### **Positive aspects:**

- Participation in early childhood and tertiary education has improved.
- Children starting school are more likely to have participated in early childhood education.<sup>14</sup>

## **Older People:**

### **Areas of concern**

- People aged over 65 have significantly lower average incomes than the rest of the population
- More than half of people over 65 are almost totally reliant on New Zealand Superannuation (NZS)<sup>15</sup>
- International Research shows that 'between 2% and 5% of older people face abuse of a physical, psychological, sexual, financial or material nature, or experience neglect'<sup>16</sup>.
- Older people aged 80 and over often experience accidents or live with chronic health conditions, also a problem for this group is housing and social connectedness<sup>17</sup>.

## **Housing and Poverty:**

### **Areas of concern**

- Over half the adult New Zealand population is overweight or obese, obesity is more common among those with low living standards<sup>18</sup>.
- Despite low levels of unemployment some New Zealanders continue to face barriers to employment, young people, people aged 60-65 years of age, women, Pacific people's, recent migrants and Maori have lower than average employment rates<sup>19</sup>.
- In 2004 unemployment rates for people aged 15-24 was 9.3% compared with 3.2% for those aged 45-64. For Maori unemployment was 8.8%, the rate for Pacific peoples was 7.4% compared with only 2.8% for Europeans<sup>20</sup>.
- Since the mid 1990s income inequality has grown suggesting that income has grown more at the middle and upper end of income distribution.

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<sup>8</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.44

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, p.18

<sup>10</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.72

<sup>11</sup> *Leading Social Development in New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.73

<sup>12</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.21

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.27

<sup>14</sup> *Leading Social Development in New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.19

<sup>15</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.73

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.83

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.66

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.74

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.39

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, see table 3.1 p.40

- There has been an increase in the proportion of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing.<sup>21</sup>

### **Positive aspects**

- In the last five years the number of working-age New Zealanders receiving a benefit has decreased by 20%.<sup>22</sup>
- Overall, unemployment has decreased from 6.1% in 1996, to 5.3% in 2001 and 3.9% in 2004.<sup>23</sup>
- There has been a decline in the proportion of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing costs.<sup>24</sup>
- The proportion of people living in homes that are over-crowded has decreased since the early 1990s.<sup>25</sup>

### **Compared to OECD countries New Zealand rates poorly in:**

- Per capita incomes
- Income inequality
- Living standards
- Suicide rates
- Obesity
- Rates of child death by intentional injury<sup>26</sup>

### **Solutions**

MSD believe that emphasis should be placed on a broad range of areas in order to improve the social well-being of all New Zealanders. In response to social issues, they have identified a number of areas that need to be addressed to improve social problems in New Zealand.

### **MSD has set out Five Priority Areas for the whole social sector<sup>27</sup>**

- 1) "Improve educational achievement among low socio-economic groups." This is seen as a top priority for spending in the wider education sector
- 2) "Increase opportunities for people to participate in sustainable employment." This is particularly important for the groups which have higher unemployment rates; these are people with disabilities, sole parents, young people and Maori and Pacific peoples.
- 3) "Promote healthy eating and healthy activity" to reduce obesity a focus on children in schools, the food industry and encouragement for more physical activity is needed across all age groups.
- 4) "Reduce tobacco use, and alcohol and other drug abuse."
- 5) "Prevent family violence, and abuse and neglect of children and older people"<sup>28</sup>.

### **To address these issues MSD suggests the following steps are taken:**

- A "systematic programme of actions" to prevent violence, abuse and neglect. They point to public education, to change the attitudes and behaviours that cause violence within families.
- There is a need for the government to work with communities, non-government organisations and government agencies to set up programmes of action.
- Increased emphasis on investment into the well-being of the population. To target problem areas as well as providing support mechanisms for the current problems.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.62

<sup>22</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.3

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, see table 3.1 p.40

<sup>24</sup> *Leading Social Development in New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.19

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> *Leading Social Development in New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.21

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p.70

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, p.78

MSD has identified three key areas to invest in:

**Health:** health promotion and primary health care.

**Justice:** prioritise crime prevention and rehabilitation.

**Education:** emphasis on early intervention<sup>29</sup>.

- Reinforce the role of the business community in adopting positive social practices, for example improving formal recognition of overseas qualifications.
- Improving linkages at all levels between Ministers, in Cabinet, among departments, in regional and local government, in the community and voluntary sector.

MSD points to **employment and education** as two key areas of focus; they see these as mechanisms for improving people's well-being.

### **Employment**

- Active approaches including encouragement, planning and incentives help move people into work, for example helping beneficiaries into work and increasing the availability of childcare.
- In order to improve employment opportunities it is important to engage with the business community.
- Improving conditions for unpaid work is also important for social well-being.

### **Education**

- An emphasis on early childhood education as "early success makes later success more likely."<sup>30</sup>
- Align tertiary training and education strongly with the labour market.
- Encourage quality on-the-job training and apprenticeships.
- More needs to be done to understand the needs and cultures of migrants.

### **Other areas of focus:**

- Encourage tertiary students to borrow only on a needs basis.
- Ensure that working age people have access to services and that barriers, such as a lack of child-care facilities are removed.
- Value the skills of older people as their skills are important, especially as the population ages.
- More support for families and communities is needed. This is particularly for Maori and Pacific families which are larger than the national average, have higher rates of sole parenthood and younger average ages of mothers at birth<sup>31</sup>.
- Housing and health: Older Maori and Pacific people are more likely than average to experience poverty<sup>32</sup>.
- Government needs to work more closely with the voluntary sector by improving communication<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> *Leading Social Development in New Zealand*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.61

<sup>30</sup> *Leading Social Development: Statement of Intent 2005/06*, Ministry of Social Development, 2005, p.52

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.55

<sup>32</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.55

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.91

## **A summary of 'Achieving better social outcomes for all New Zealanders, our families and our communities' Briefing to the Incoming Minister, Ministry of Social Development**

### **Key Messages**

- Support parents and families and shift the emphasis of our social investment towards children
- Develop early intervention and prevention programmes and services
- Promote participation in child care and education services and increase the availability of these services
- Provide young people with support in further education, training and work.
- Help young people make the right choices with regard to tertiary education and industry training
- Improving opportunities for working age New Zealanders
- Develop strategies that ensure future generations have stability in retirement
- Expanding employment opportunities for older people
- Help older people live independently
- Provide better quality services to older people
- Enable older people to feel safe and secure, live in dignity and be free from discrimination.<sup>34</sup>

### **What needs to change:**

- **More research into what works**<sup>35</sup>.
- **Tilt balance towards social investment**<sup>36</sup>.
- **Emphasis on early intervention**-intervening early in the life of the child and early in the problem<sup>37</sup>.
- **New approaches to providing services** to those in need, there are three parts to this; active case management and new technologies, service integration and partnerships. Active case management focuses on making case managers more actively involved with their clients. New technology has improved services for clients. Service integration would mean that people receive additional relevant information when contacting specific agencies. Improving partnerships with organisations such as schools and community groups is also noted<sup>38</sup>.

### **Children and families**

MSD notes that there will be an emphasis on investment towards children in order to:

- Give children the best start in life
- Reduce the level of disadvantage and harm experienced by children
- Increase child development opportunities
- Provide young people with the best prospects for success<sup>39</sup>

### **Early intervention**

**Rationale:** early intervention is important as it "can work to stop problems becoming entrenched and change negative life paths by dealing with life matters early in the life of a child, and early in the life of a problem."<sup>40</sup>

### **Possible solutions:**

- Provide information and support to families and children early in life.
- Ensure parents have access to skills and knowledge.
- Effectively screen for problems.
- Recognise additional needs of families and refer them to further services<sup>41</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, pp.3-5

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p.10

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.11

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.12

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.22

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, p.24

### **Reduce level of disadvantage and harm within families**

**Rationale:** New Zealand has high rates of violence within families and need to develop prevention strategies and active early intervention programmes. MSD states that it plans to take “renewed action to reinvigorate [its] response to family violence.”<sup>42</sup>

#### **Recent Initiatives:**

- MSD has planned a **public education and awareness** campaign to try and change attitudes and behaviours
- **A Violence within Families Task Force** was established in 2005 that involves government and non-government organisations
- **Work is being done to further involve community providers** in protection services for lower-risk cases that Child, Youth and Family are notified about.<sup>43</sup>

#### **Possible solutions:**

- Increased understanding about what drives violence within families is needed (the Task Force will be part of this process).
- Increase awareness of violence and neglect within families
- Set objectives about families being safe
- Engage community leaders and organisations in responses to violence
- Increase the capacity of services
- Address perpetrators and the impact of violence on children<sup>44</sup>

### **Increase access to childcare and education**

**Rationale:** Demand for childcare in New Zealand exceeds the availability. Children need quality early childhood education as part of their developmental needs. Families need access to quality affordable child care in order to improve their living standards and remove parental barriers to employment<sup>45</sup>.

#### **Possible solutions:**

- Develop a medium-term plan of action to increase availability and accessibility of affordable child care and education<sup>46</sup>.
- Make disadvantaged families a priority group for participation in early childhood education and care services.
- Promote school-sited and community-based early childhood education and care centres for working families.
- Develop quality home-based care for families who work outside standard hours<sup>47</sup>.

#### **Recent Initiatives:**

- Increasing the access to the **Childcare and Out-of-School Care and Recreation Subsidy**.
- Increased funding for formal early childhood education services.
- Making the Childcare Subsidy available for home-based services that are registered by MSD<sup>48</sup>.

### **Providing young people with the best prospects**

**Rationale:** The transition from school into further education, training or work can be difficult for young people. They need support so they can reach their full potential<sup>49</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.25

<sup>42</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.27

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, see pp. 28-29 for MSD action plan to reduce family violence

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, p.29

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, p.31

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p.60

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.31

### Possible solutions:

- Build networks to support young people.
- Support at risk young people as they make the transition from school to further education, training or employment.
- Work alongside other agencies helping young people.
- Expand prevention-orientated programmes, for example having social workers in schools<sup>50</sup>.

### Initiatives:

- **The Youth Transitions Service** works with schools and encourages at risk teenagers to remain in education<sup>51</sup>.

### Providing employment for working-age people

Jobs and families are often the two vital parts of working-age people's lives.

MSD has focused on the job market with emphasis on helping people into work.

**Rationale:** Income provides stability and a higher standard of living for families

### Recent Initiatives:

- In order to help those on benefits into work MSD has integrated employment and benefit services. **The case management model** has been running over several years. It has meant that case managers have become specialists in different areas, such as finding work for mature unemployed.
- **The enhanced work-focused services** began in June 2005 and focuses on individuals needs and aspirations in regards to their employment<sup>52</sup>.
- **The Working for Families package** has been set up to improve conditions for low and middle-income families with children. Families with children who come under the \$25,000 to \$45,000 band receive an average increase of \$100 a week in income assistance by 2007<sup>53</sup>.

### Possible solutions:

- **A more individualised approach** that takes the clients situation and needs into account
- For people who are able to work job opportunity focused employment services and income support are needed.
- For **people who have sole care of children** a more individualised approach is needed to look at options for employment and childcare<sup>54</sup>.
- For **people with ill health or a disability** a more individualised approach focused on what the person is able to do<sup>55</sup>.

### Help with housing

**Rationale:** Housing quality is important for the well being of all people. It is the largest cost for most people. There has been an increase in the proportion of households spending more than 30% of their income on housing<sup>56</sup>. Home ownership in New Zealand has also fallen<sup>57</sup>.

### Initiatives:

- **The Accommodation Supplement** is available for low-income homeowners and renters; this is additional help for rent or mortgage<sup>58</sup>.

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<sup>50</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.34

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p.33

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, p.48

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 58

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.54

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.56

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.62

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p.62

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p.63

### **Possible solutions:**

- The Accommodation Supplement needs to be reviewed in order to determine whether it is an effective way of providing housing assistance.
- Examine the 'state housing income-related rent rules for working-age tenants and benefit employment assistance, to ensure the systems are complimentary and encourage tenants to improve their circumstances.
- Work with the Department of Building and Housing and others to ensure the rental sector will meet future demand.
- Determine whether more support is needed to help lower-income families into their own home<sup>59</sup>.

### **Older People**

MSD states that for older people 'it is important to ensure adequate living standards and to improve access to the services they need to help them participate in the community and the economy, and remain independent for as long as possible.'<sup>60</sup>

### **'Plan for New Zealand's ageing population'**

**Rationale:** The number of people in New Zealand aged over 65 will increase in the coming years, in 30 years it is estimated that the percentage of the population over 65 will double from 12% to 24%<sup>61</sup>.

### **Possible solutions:**

- Develop proposals to 'remove barriers to participation for older people in social and economic life'.
- Plan for service delivery implications of an ageing population.
- Research is needed to understand implications of an ageing population<sup>62</sup>.

### **'Improve the future provision for retirement'**

**Rationale:** In years to come the ageing population will place challenges on the system with the cost of New Zealand Superannuation rising.

### **Initiatives:**

- New Zealand Superannuation (NZS) universal payment for New Zealanders aged over 65.
- Additional financial support is available for older people with health needs.
- The Accommodation Supplement is also available for those who need it.
- **From April 2007** a work-based savings scheme for retirement that comes with government incentives.
- **The Retirement Commission** promotes information and heightens awareness about the need to save for retirement<sup>63</sup>.

### **Possible solutions:**

- Reform the system of supplementary payments.
- Encourage savings among younger generations.
- Initiatives to increase financial literacy to create higher levels of trust and participation in saving schemes.
- 'Increasing targeted support for private savings and home ownership'<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.64

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.67

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.68

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, p.71

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p.74

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*



### **'Increase employment opportunities for mature workers and older people'**

**Rationale:** Life expectancy is increasing and health is improving meaning that more people over 65 are able to work. Strong labour demand in New Zealand means that there are high rates of employment among older people<sup>65</sup>.

#### **Possible solutions:**

- Work with employers and training providers to change perceptions and ensure that older people are valued for their skills, experience and knowledge.
- Increased employment rates for mature and older workers.
- Provide better information for mature and older people wanting to retire.
- Higher levels of case management to help older and mature workers to find employment<sup>66</sup>.

### **'Increase support for older people to remain living independently in the community'**

**Rationale:** Many older people with health and care needs would rather remain in their communities rather than moving into long-term residential care.

#### **Possible solutions:**

- Expand home and community care services.
- Provide support for family and other carers.
- Expand to home visitor programmes to help overcome social isolation that a lot of older people feel<sup>67</sup>.

### **'Improve the delivery of services to older people'**

**Rationale:** Services to older people are fragmented and of poor quality these services need to become better co-ordinated.

#### **Initiatives:**

- MSD has begun a review of its service delivery arrangements to older people which will help the design of future delivery arrangements for older people.

#### **Possible solutions:**

- Review the range of services to older people.
- Long term funding to community and voluntary organisations which are major providers to the services of older people.
- Provide a 'one-stop shop' whereby older people can locate and access services.
- Develop a national information programme to provide older people with information on 'lifestyle, nutrition and other low-level preventative services'<sup>68</sup>.

### **Protect older people in our society**

**Rationale:** Older people are often vulnerable to abuse and neglect in society. They 'have the right to feel safe and secure, to live with dignity and to age in a positive way, free from discrimination'

#### **Initiatives:**

- There are currently twenty two **Elder Abuse and Neglect Prevention services**. These are partly funded by MSD. They are responsible for investigating complaints of abuse, co-ordinating intervention services, providing education and raising awareness in communities.

#### **Possible solutions:**

- **Promote positive attitudes** towards older people.
- **Review funding** for Neglect and Prevention services.

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<sup>65</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.75

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p.78

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.79

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, p.82

- Involve government, communities and non-government organisations in the development a 'comprehensive strategy for addressing elder abuse and neglect'.
- **Strengthening existing legislation** to ensure 'adequate protection of older people's rights and interests'<sup>69</sup>.

#### **Key areas of focus for MSD are:**

- Proactively supporting parents and families to ensure children get help early in life.
- Acting early for families and children who are disadvantaged.
- Building further opportunities for New Zealanders to participate in the economy and society.
- Improving services to older people in order for them to lead active and independent lives<sup>70</sup>.

#### **'Delivering better social outcomes through community-based social services'<sup>71</sup>**

*Community-based social services are described by MSD as "well established and extremely diverse" however they also note that they are vulnerable.<sup>72</sup>*

- Community-based social services are important in supporting the well being of people. Government needs to build organisational capability and capacity in this area. Adequate funding and support from government is needed<sup>73</sup>.

New Zealand's social services struggle to employ and retain staff

#### **Key workforce issues that require immediate attention:**

- Shortage of qualified social workers
- Lack of training and career structure
- Lack of information about non-government workforce<sup>74</sup>

#### **Areas to address in relation to workforce issues:**

- recruitment
- retention
- training and development
- organisational development
- information on non-government workforce<sup>75</sup>

Many organisations are small, often new and have weak infrastructure<sup>76</sup>

#### **Possible solutions:**

- Provide an advice service for community social service providers.
- MSD recommends the establishment of a plan to provide co-ordination and sustain the community-based social services.
- Funding and contracting arrangements need to be developed to better support delivery of social services<sup>77</sup>.

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<sup>69</sup> *Achieving Better Social Outcomes for all New Zealanders, our Families and our Communities*, Ministry of Social Development, September 2005, p.84

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, p.85

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p.89

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p.91

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, p.90

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p.92

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, p.93

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, p.92

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p.94