

# Election 2005

## Key Questions for Candidates from the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services

### **NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL OF CHRISTIAN SOCIAL SERVICES**

*The members of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) are Anglican Care, the Baptist Union, Catholic Social Services, the Methodist Church, Presbyterian Support New Zealand and the Salvation Army.*



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**[www.nzccss.org.nz](http://www.nzccss.org.nz)**

# ABOUT NZCCSS

## ***Our Membership***

The members of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) are Anglican Care, the Baptist Union, Catholic Social Services, the Methodist Church, Presbyterian Support New Zealand and the Salvation Army.

Collectively, our members have around 550 social service delivery sites in all areas of the country. There are eight main areas in which our members deliver services - Child and Family Services, Services for Older People, Foodbank and Emergency Services, Housing, Budgeting, Disability, Addictions and Employment. There are also a number of organisations involved in community development and support work.

When information about these sites is aggregated it is estimated that they:

- employ over 10,700 full or part-time staff;
- use over 9,300 volunteers a week;
- serve around 50,000 clients at any one time;
- spend over \$274 million a year.

This size and diversity in services are amongst the many reasons for NZCCSS to celebrate its membership and the work that they do to meet people's needs throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

## ***Our Mission***

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services works for a just and compassionate society in Aotearoa New Zealand. We see this as a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ. In seeking to fulfil this mission, we are committed to giving priority to the poor and vulnerable members of our society and Te Tiriti O Waitangi.

We will work out these values by:

- articulating a vision for New Zealand society
- developing and critiquing policy
- advocating for appropriate policies, services and resources
- providing information and networking services to members

## ***Our Structure and Key Work Areas***

NZCCSS is governed by a national Council made up of two representatives from each denomination. A small Secretariat team, headed by the Executive Officer, carries out the day-to-day work of the Council. This includes information gathering, research on social services and building relationships with government officials. The majority of NZCCSS work comes under three main policy areas:

- poverty & housing
- children, young people and families
- services for older people

A Policy Group oversees the policy and research work that NZCCSS does in each of these areas. Each Policy Group is made up of at least two council representatives plus social services managers, academics or others with particular expertise in that area.

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## Introduction

In the context of buoyant economic times it is easy to overlook that some New Zealanders are struggling in the face of very difficult living circumstances. In this election year, it's important to look beneath the glossy statistics and upbeat remarks of some politicians and media commentators, and focus on the people in our society who, often through no fault of their own, cannot enjoy the 'good times' most of us can.

We've had requests from members asking if Council would prepare some notes on a range of issues.

The following pages list a number of topics which cover issues NZCCSS is concerned about. They're written in a style that allows you to understand our views on the topic and ask questions of your local candidates. Obviously, the issues are more complicated than we've presented them – so to be concise, we've outlined the major themes and proposed a question on each topic. Our media releases and work areas are online at [www.nzccss.org.nz](http://www.nzccss.org.nz)

If you'd like further information on the major parties' policies, their websites are:

ACT	<a href="http://www.act.org.nz">www.act.org.nz</a>	National	<a href="http://www.national.org.nz">www.national.org.nz</a>
Green Party	<a href="http://www.greens.org.nz">www.greens.org.nz</a>	New Zealand First	<a href="http://www.nzfirst.org.nz">www.nzfirst.org.nz</a>
Labour	<a href="http://www.labour.org.nz">www.labour.org.nz</a>	Progressive	<a href="http://www.progressive.org.nz">www.progressive.org.nz</a>
Maori Party	<a href="http://www.maoriparty.com">www.maoriparty.com</a>	United Future	<a href="http://www.unitedfuture.org.nz">www.unitedfuture.org.nz</a>

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- **Genuine options for parents**

Parents play a critical role in their children's upbringing. NZCCSS believes parents should be able to stay at home or return to work – or a combination of both. NZCCSS supports government policies that provide genuine options for parents.

**Question:** *What commitment will the candidate and their party give to support parents to be able to stay at home to be with and bring up their children or return to work knowing their children are well cared for?*

- **Services for families and children**

Services supporting families and children should have an emphasis on preventative care. While there is an important role for programmes which help children and families at risk and those in crisis, NZCCSS also asks parties to strongly support a range of preventative services for families provided by community organisations.

**Question:** *What policies do the candidate and their party have to improve the provision of quality, community- based preventative and early intervention services for New Zealand families and their children?*

- **Housing for low-income New Zealanders**

NZCCSS believes that good quality and affordable housing should be accessible to all New Zealanders. Housing plays an integral role in family well-being and thus New Zealand society. Inadequate housing has flow-on effects on health, education, use of social services, community participation, violence and abuse. Housing affordability has declined significantly since the 1980s for the lowest income New Zealanders, both in relation to the cost of home ownership and the cost of renting. Families have to devote an increasingly large proportion of their income to pay for their housing costs.

Affordable, appropriate and secure housing is a key to improving health, well-being, participation in education and employment for all members of society, particularly for those on low incomes. There is a key role for government to ensure that there is adequacy and affordability of housing for all New Zealanders, both through the direct provision of housing (and income support) and through regulation and strategic oversight of the housing sector.

Unless there is a major effort to improve housing affordability, an increasing number of New Zealand families will miss out on decent housing, and this will have flow-on effects throughout communities.

**Question:** *What commitment will the candidate and their party make to ensure that all New Zealanders have access to good quality and affordable housing?*

- **Eliminating poverty**

Despite strong economic times there are a group of people, often with multiple social, health and financial problems, that somehow 'fall through the cracks'. NZCCSS welcomes the 'Working for Families' package but is concerned about the welfare of children of parents who are not in the paid workforce. A commitment is needed from government to wipe out poverty in New Zealand. NZCCSS encourages government, communities and individuals to re-examine some of the common assumptions about poverty, and pursue policy changes to help protect the most vulnerable members of our community.

**Question:** *What commitment will the candidate and their party make to eliminating poverty among New Zealanders?*

- **Income support**

Full and correct entitlement to income support is of utmost importance. NZCCSS is concerned that many people presenting to our agencies' foodbanks are not receiving the full amount of income support they are eligible for. Government must make a commitment to strengthening the capacity of Work and Income to communicate its policies clearly and consistently across New Zealand.

**Question:** *What commitment will the candidate and their party make to ensure that New Zealanders receive their full and correct entitlement to income support?*

- **Future of services for older New Zealanders**

The New Zealand population is ageing rapidly and there needs to be a clear vision for the future of how to provide appropriate care for older New Zealanders.

A commitment is needed from government and its health agencies to support the development and implementation of quality services for a growing aged care sector.

This year's Budget missed the chance to inject significant funding into the sector for services provided for older people – both for people staying in their own homes requiring care, and for those people who require or want the care provided in residential care facilities.

NZCCSS has argued for an urgent injection of funding over the next three years to ensure suitable local services for older members of our community are provided.

**Question:**     ***What vision does the candidate and their party have to secure quality care for older New Zealanders?***

- **The role of religious providers in the aged care sector**

Religious providers have a proud history of providing aged care in New Zealand and have been at the forefront of innovation. A key role that religious aged care providers play is to offer services for people who have little or no wealth and income of their own to pay for care services and are therefore entirely dependent on the government subsidy to cover the cost of their care. A number of Christian residential aged care providers have left the sector. If our agencies can't look after the frail and elderly – who will?

**Question:**     ***What role does the candidate and their party believe that religious providers play, and should play in the aged care sector in the future? What will they do to ensure Christian aged care services are financially viable?***

- **Aged care workforce**

Aged care workers deserve a 'fair go'. The pay difference between District Health Boards (DHBs) and the rest of the aged care sector is now becoming so great that recruitment is a critical issue.

Some Christian social service providers are losing staff to DHBs because there is insufficient funding for them to offer wages that are comparable to those that are now available at DHBs. Aged care workers deserve a pay rise, but our member agencies are finding it increasingly difficult to find the money to pass on, with costs having risen, and government funding having stood still.

**Question:** *What will the candidate and their party do to ensure that Christian social services can afford to pay staff a fair and just wage and so be able to compete effectively in the employment market?*