



Briefing to Incoming Minister

New Zealand Council of
Christian Social Services

November 2023

Rise up, take courage and do it.

Ezra 10:4

Ki te kotahi te Kākaho, ka whati, ki te kapuia, e kore e whati.
When we stand alone, we are vulnerable, but together we are unbreakable.

Our Sector, Our Nation

Aotearoa New Zealand is home to just over five million people, all of whom share the dream for security, adequacy and wellbeing for themselves and their family. For some among us that is their reality, but for many in our communities these ideals are far off.

Our members are the people in our communities doing what they can to alleviate these pressures and bring compassion, dignity and justice to those most disenfranchised. We believe our members are effective in their work because they believe strongly in their mission and the positive impacts they bring. Every day, those who work and volunteer for our member organisations do so in the hope of a just and compassionate Aotearoa, where everyone can find safety, joy and prosperity.

Through this service to society, our members see the challenges faced across our communities. Our role here at the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services is to be their voice – for those they serve and for the people and organisations themselves.

In the year between June 2022 and June 2023, 2,013 extra households received Accommodation Supplement, to a total of \$346,755 **because their household income could not meet their housing costs**

90,780 households received Temporary Additional Support in the same 12-month period, because their income could not meet their essential living costs.

The Social Service workforce is **underfunded, understaffed, under-resourced, and underqualified** for the task placed upon them.

Homogenisation of the workforce has reduced the capacity for individuals to be supported fully by specialists.

In the social sector we are so over-reliant on social work that working beyond your scope of practice is accepted as the norm. Those with lower-level qualifications are working to address core work.

Our nurses shoulder responsibilities far beyond their training and scope of practice daily.

Food prices have **increased by 12%**, resulting in an unprecedented spike in kai support access through community providers, with one provider distributing food to almost half a million people across the nation every month.

Our nation's 5-12 year olds are fundamentally under-served at a structural level. At some point, we have lost track of their developmental needs, any focused attention on their wellbeing or even a social workforce with a deep understanding of childhood.

There are no national plans for this cohort outside of educational targets, and no clarity that our Ministries of Education, Children or Social Development have any child specific evidence base to support their direction.

We believe our tamariki deserve better than this.

The Aged Care sector is **ready to collapse** under the weight of the ageing population and systemic underfunding.

Our not-for-profit providers are fighting the pressures of rising costs, subsidy insufficiency, wage inequity, staff shortages and older people that are arriving more frail and in higher numbers than ever before.

At the end of the June quarter this year, **24,717 households were on the social housing register.**

In 2022, those in the highest 20% income of the population had 2.5x more disposable income than the entire bottom 20%.

In the same year, **15.5% of our households had less than half the median disposable income.**

Hardship assistance payments totalled \$248.4 million in the 2022/2023 year, which was 13.1% more than the previous 12 months.

The majority of this was Special Needs Grants, **with the vast number (311,637) being for food, totalling \$33.4m**, and followed by 26,403 applications for housing related cost assistance, totalling \$87.6m

The average median net worth of a New Zealand household was \$397,000 in 2021, but when this is broken down by tenure type, enormous disparity is found.

Those living in homes they don't own have a median net worth of approximately \$55,000, whereas those paying a mortgage on their own home sit around \$460,000, those who own their home mortgage free at around \$900,000, and those who have their dwelling held in their trust at almost \$1.2m.

\$1.2m is more than 20 times the median net worth of \$55k.

The Issues We See

NZCCSS Overview

Our core mission is to work for a fair and compassionate future for all. We see this vision for our collective future as an extension of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Through our members, we see the issues at the core of our society - growing division and inequality, systems of support that are punitive and hard to access, disregard for whole cohorts of our population based on their age, lack of effective communication between government and community, and the compartmentalisation and bureaucracy of government departments impeding their capacity to do the work they were designed to do.

We and our members are ready to work with this Government to tackle these issues. Together, we can bring about a just and compassionate Aotearoa.

Ageism

Tuatahi

Both ends of our lifespan are consistently underrepresented in policy and funding priority

The wellbeing of 5-12 year olds is routinely left in the hands of schools. We fundamentally underserve this age bracket through poor understanding of their unique needs, and none of our Ministries or Departments responsible for them have any clear national plans for their wellbeing, nor any evidence to support what little direction they have.

Policy around our older people is almost exclusively confined to arguments around the superannuation age, discussions around retirement villages, and supporting prolonged employability. So many of the facets of being older are either ignored or relegated to being supported by disability spaces. Our Aged Care sector is crumbling under the weight of an ageing population and underfunding by successive governments.

Government Siloing

Tuarua

When trying to effect change for their communities, our members are constantly hamstrung by the strict and inflexible siloing of Ministries, Departments, and their respective funding.

Holistic models of care, support, and progress rely on interconnected service provision. Complex issues require complex and multifaceted solutions from across Government, but we cannot currently access the support for this under the current model of funding and engagement.

Ad hoc, and oddly targetted pay settlements have seen loss of relativity and kaimahi having to move within their scope of practice to access adequate pay. Timely payment of Pay Equity settlements vary depending on which Ministry is involved and is leading to frustration for staff and providers.

Workforce

Tuatoru

Our members are some of the major employers of the community, health and social service workforce across NZ. We value our amazing kaimahi, but have huge struggles that don't seem to be improving.

As a sector, we are over-reliant on two professions (social workers and nurses), resulting in issues of over-work, massive scope creep and responsibility over and above what is appropriate to the role. The growth in the pre-degree space is largely to backfill core social work and nursing practice but scarcity of staff is seeing an unplanned, and often unsafe hub-spoke model of practice have to be adopted.

A lack of quality Bachelor level qualifications is impacting who receives what training, and limits growth in emerging, crucial specialty fields (children, youth, older people, disability). The lack of learning in degrees about the people graduates will work with is deeply concerning. There's over focus on practice and professional identity and an under focus on understanding, evaluation and critical thinking.

Our Recommendations

Actively support our 5-12 year olds with evidence-based best practice, putting their unique needs in the forefront of strategies that impact them

Commit to the development of an Older Person's Poverty Monitor

Recommit to the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) and Principles for Older Persons (UNPOP). View this commitment as part of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in which tamariki and kaumātua are taonga

Create avenues for effective collaboration between Government departments and Ministries with community providers, to enable holistic frameworks and collaborative problem solving

Reduce the administrative complexity of Government to make savings both in cost and in dignity

Enact a strong plan to solve the ongoing workforce issues we face. Grow our workforce, pay us fairly and equally, and ensure we have training relevant to the people we serve

Resources

The Workforce Guide

Our guide to understanding the variety of roles across the social, community and health workforce and the value they add. An A-Z of the depth and breadth of the workforce of our sector.



Te Kōrero mō ngā Kaumātua

An online resource designed to support readers to develop a good understanding of the context of older people in Aotearoa, at an individual, community, societal and structural level.

Advocacy and Engagement with Government

Regular written consultations and submissions - we seek to find solutions leading to a better outcome for those we serve
Development of new 'explainer' style publications, eg, Labour Manifesto Tracker, Understanding Universal Basic Incomes



NZCCSS Housing and Support Providers Tool

A central resource of connection and collaboration for providers of housing and housing-related services across Aotearoa



The Gaps Report

The follow on from Te Kōrero mō ngā Kaumātua, highlighting some of the most noticeable gaps we see in the Older Person's Support sector, and offering practical and readily implementable solutions

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The Issues We See

Child and Family Portfolio

We advocate for a society in which children are recognised as taonga and treated accordingly.

Our member organisations work with children and their families in a variety of contexts and across a range of services. Our members provide care and protection, therapeutic assessment and counselling services, programmes such as Mana Ake and Seasons for Growth. They are Social Workers in Schools, early childhood educators, psychologists, supervised contact supervisors, mentors, housing providers and advocates.

We currently have a specific focus on children in “Middle Childhood” (5-12 years) and seek to work with government to raise awareness and understanding of this important stage in children’s development. Together, we can bring about a just and compassionate Aotearoa.

The Forgotten Middle Childhood Stage

Tuatahi

Outside of education, middle childhood is not adequately recognised and prioritised as a distinct and important developmental stage within government policy.

There is a huge opportunity for a forward-thinking Government to explore targeting the needs of this age stage - particularly with a focus on early intervention. In the same way that our approach to the early childhood years is improving outcomes, the logical next area to focus on this age and then scaffold into the youth space.

Child-Focused Services and Workforce

Tuarua

Children have limited access to services and supports that are crucial to their wellbeing, largely as the workforce itself has limited knowledge, or pathways to correct this. It has been nearly 15 years since our last Child Therapy Bachelor level qualification ceased, and a decade since similar Post Graduate Qualifications were also closed.

Our major workforces working directly with 5-12 year olds complete general and outdated courses on human development and may gain ad hoc information from interested lecturers. But actual courses in working with and understanding children and their specific needs are limited to 0-5 years and 12+.

This lack of workforce expertise flows into the services delivered to children, and the development of programmes to meet their needs - most of which are taken from overseas contexts and rebranded for Aotearoa. While we have a Ministry for Children, a Ministry of Education and other units focused on the wellbeing of children, staff in these spaces have little to no training in actually working with children.

Need for Good Information

Tuatoru

There is a deep need for development of good evidence, research and policy as attention on this area has languished since the 1950's - locally and internationally.

What information we have could at the least be collated, shared and made more accessible. For instance, while we have good understanding of physical development and needs in this space, we have poor or no information on their social-emotional stages and growth.

A very quick scratch of the surface of most of our policy for this stage is based on western models of development that emerged mid-last century. They don't reflect vast technological change, what we know understand of trauma and neurology. And yet they underpin our education, social development and mental health approaches.

This gap is a huge opportunity to be explored.

Our Recommendations

Actively support our 5-12 year olds with evidence-based best practice, putting their unique needs in the forefront of strategies that impact them

Bring together experts, professionals, and other interested parties to consider how we can work together to grow understanding of this period of development and advocate for children's needs

Invest in research targeted at children's development during the middle years

Raise awareness and understanding of this development stage among the children's workforce through information and training

Increase opportunities for children in this developmental stage to have a voice in decisions that affect their lives

Recommit to and expand national understanding of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). View this commitment as part of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in which tamariki are taonga.

Resources



Te Kōrero mō ngā Tamariki

This briefing is informed by research we are currently undertaking to better understand and serve our tamariki.

Using Te Whāriki as a guide, we are creating an accessible resource to serve as a starting point for those wanting to understand 5-12 year olds, their place in Aotearoa and the gaps we urgently need to address.

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The Issues We See

Older Persons Portfolio

We consider our Kaumātua to be taonga, and we strive for a society in which they are treated as such.

Our member organisations serve our older people throughout the Aged Care sector, from in-home support to Age Related Residential Care, and they see the gaps in the way this cohort is served. Successive governments have failed to listen to the sector when they say a crisis is coming, and we are running out of time to prevent a total collapse.

We and our members are ready to work with this Government to tackle these issues. Together, we can bring about a just and compassionate Aotearoa.

Ageism in Aotearoa

Tuatahi

Ageism is the last socially acceptable form of discrimination.

Policy around our older people is almost exclusively confined to arguments around the superannuation age, discussions around retirement villages, and supporting prolonged employability.

So many of the facets of being older are either ignored or relegated to being supported by disability spaces. Our Aged Care sector is crumbling under the weight of an ageing population and underfunding by successive governments.

Ageism needs to be brought to the forefront of the collective consideration so that we can stop making choices that strongly and negatively impact our older people through negligence and lack of consideration.

Older Persons' Poverty

Tuarua

You cannot solve what you cannot see, and you cannot correct what you cannot measure. Poverty Indicators grow national understanding and provide a framework for measuring and understanding this critical issue.

With no adult measure of poverty in Aotearoa, we cannot know how many of our older people are experiencing poverty, deprivation, or material hardship. Without knowing how many of them experience this, we cannot make any meaningful improvements in this area.

We need societal level tools to challenge societal level issues. The poverty of our older people is systemic and so will need a robust measurement tool to shape understanding.

Aged Care is Crumbling

Tuatoru

Successive governments have decided that the issue of failing Aged Care infrastructure is a problem for the future. Unfortunately for us, that future is now. The Aged Care sector is crumbling - ageing in place isn't supported, services are ending, wings or whole Age Related Residential Care facilities are closing, nurses and healthcare workers are leaving for other sectors.

Without immediate intervention, the incoming wave of older people - the largest we have ever experienced due to an ageing population - will be without adequate services to support them for the basics, let alone provide quality of life.

We cannot continue to expect this sector to subsist on crumbs while providing world-class support for our older people.

Our Recommendations

Commit to the development of an Older Persons Poverty Monitor

Actively address the systemic ageism that underpins the underinvestment in our older people and the services that support them

Expand Government understanding of Older People beyond Superannuation and Retirement Villages

Get in front of the Aged Care crisis by engaging with the sector to develop a plan for addressing the systemic failures from successive governments' underfunding

Recommit to the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (UNPOP) and Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA). View this commitment as part of honouring Te Tiriti o Waitangi, in which kaumātua are taonga.

Create avenues for effective collaboration between Government departments and Ministries with community providers, to enable holistic frameworks and collaborative problem-solving

Resources



[Te Kōrero mō ngā Kaumātua](#)
This briefing is informed by our recently published guide [Te Kōrero mō ngā Kaumātua](#). Designed to support readers to develop holistic understanding of the context of older people in Aotearoa - and the gaps we urgently need to address.

[The Workforce Guide](#)

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[The Gaps Report](#)

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[Ageism in Aotearoa](#)

How does Aotearoa stack up internationally when it comes to ageism? We assess methods for measuring ageism, and apply them domestically to see how well we are faring internationally

[Advocacy and Engagement with Government](#)

Regular written consultations and submissions made to Government seeking to find solutions leading to a better outcome for those we serve

Development of new 'explainer' style publications, eg, Labour Manifesto Tracker, Understanding Universal Basic Incomes



The Issues We See

Equity and Inclusion Portfolio

At the core of our work is the mission to strive for a fair and compassionate future for all Aotearoa. We see this mission as being embedded in the values of equity and inclusion, and it is through this lens we approach all our work.

Inequality and exclusion have been the historic standard for many groups, and we celebrate the strides that we have made as a nation while still championing causes that combat those that remain.

We and our members are ready to work with this Government to tackle these issues. Together, we can bring about an Aotearoa that lives these values.

Consultation Efficacy

Tuatahi

The Government and its various Ministries and Departments have a responsibility to engage in consultation with the populace, but is this being done effectively and in line with Te Tiriti o Waitangi?

Large sections of our population are never engaged with in consultation, and in many cases it feels that even when there has been consultation with communities or sector members, the feedback is either deemed to difficult to implement, or ignored outright.

Our members actively seek to be committed and engaged consultation partners, but the current system does not facilitate this in a meaningful way.

Government Administration

Tuarua

Access to benefits and supports is complex, punitive, and leaves many people feeling that the system is designed to keep them from reaching their entitlements. While the argument can be made that it ensures that only those who are eligible receive these entitlements, we ask whether the cost - both to government in terms of staffing and complexity, and to those who are eligible in terms of dignity - is worth the meagre cost savings from preventing the few who are stopped.

Streamlining and simplifying the systems to make them mana-supporting and beneficial to those who access them, instead of scrutinising and punitive, would have a net positive from any way you measure "cost" and "benefit".

Social Cohesion

Tuatoru

In order to be an effective and functioning society, we must foster a sense of cohesion and unity.

Events such as the Christchurch shootings and the COVID-19 pandemic revealed deep cracks in our society's cohesion, and these have grown over the course of the last few years into chasms threatening to swallow our capacity for civil discourse, unity, and respect for our shared humanity.

Government has a responsibility to be part of the solution, and to drive social reconnection. We need leadership that can foster harmony and forge communities together. Our members are experts in this area, and stand ready to assist

Our Recommendations

Implement effective forms of consultation, with both communities and sectors, and ensure that feedback is acted upon instead of ignored

Reduce the administrative complexity of Government to make savings both in cost and in dignity

Ensure that interactions between individuals and Government in pursuit of entitlements and support are in good faith and not in a punitive framework

Actively prioritise investment in and protection of social cohesion throughout the country

Resources

Advocacy and Engagement with Government

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Development of new 'explainer' style publications, eg, Labour Manifesto Tracker, Understanding Universal Basic Incomes



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Our Relationships to Government

Information and support
Consultations,
working groups and advisory



Health and Wellbeing of Older
People Working Group

Representation of our Providers
Submissions and Consultations



Tenant Advocates Network
Submissions and Consultations

Our Workstreams

Child and Family

Build Children's Sector

5-12s deserve the same level of professional support and deep understanding as ECE and Youth. We want to build this up around them, to ensure they are best supported at this critical age.

Middle Childhood Research

To support the pursuit of a strong 5-12s sector, we want to gather, support, and instigate research specific to this age group. We cannot make best practice guidelines without the right information.

Access Issues

Middle Childhood has some of the longest waiting periods for services, even within private systems. Investing in our children has the best chance of providing them the opportunities to meet their potential.

Older Persons

Addressing Ageism

Ageism is the last socially acceptable form of discrimination, and permeates all levels of policy and performance - we cannot make progress when ageism halts progress in its tracks.

Older Persons Poverty

Aotearoa has no indicator set for poverty in adults, let alone older people. We will be working towards the implementation of an Older Persons Poverty metric - that which we do not measure we cannot improve.

Aged Care Action Plan

Following in the footsteps of the Dementia Mate Wareware plan, we are working with the Aged Care sector to develop a plan to tackle the coming crisis that is our underfunded, under-resourced and under-prepared Aged Care sector.

Equity and Inclusion

Consultation Efficacy

What does it mean to consult effectively with stakeholders, community and those impacted by decisions? We will be looking at what strategies the government can use for effective outcomes.

Government Administration

The level of administrative complexity in our social welfare system costs us a fortune as a nation - how better could that money be allocated? Would a more streamlined system improve welfare levels?

Social Cohesion

Division, aggression and community segregation are on the rise. Societies need cohesion in order to be successful and peaceful - how can we work towards supporting people to understand our shared humanity and foster cohesion and unity?

Ko wai tātou

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) represents more than 230 member organisations providing a range of community, health and social support services across Aotearoa. These organisations include some of the most recognised and highly regarded names in social service provision, and all are world famous in their own rohe.

Nationally, the range and scope of our member networks is extensive. Around 230 separate providers in 55 towns and cities throughout New Zealand deliver 37 types of services through 1,024 programmes. Members employ over 5,000 full-time staff, 7,000 part-time staff, and coordinate almost 16,000 volunteers.

Their mahi informs our deep understanding of the everyday lives of New Zealand communities as we work towards achieving a just and compassionate society for all. We see this work as an extension of the mission of Jesus Christ, which we seek to fulfil through our commitment to giving priority to the systematically disempowered. We feel a deep sense of responsibility to uphold the articles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and take action to push for equity for all.

Our work is focused in three policy areas – Equity and Inclusion, Children and Families, and Older People. For each area, we have a specialist working group made up of leaders of service organisations from across the country who provide up-to-date knowledge of experiences and need in their communities. We call these groups 'Policy Groups'.

This knowledge, along with input from the representatives of Council's six members, informs our mahi of providing research, representation, connection, good practice dissemination, policy advice / information and advocacy services for our members.

Our Member Organisations

