

CHURCH LEADERS' STATEMENT: TOWARDS A MORE JUST AND COMPASSIONATE SOCIETY (March 2008)

The Church leaders' statement made in support of the call for more action issued by the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, '**Aroha tētahi ki tētahi - Let Us Look After Each Other**', is:

Issues related to poverty, families and children, older people and housing should all be big enough to transcend party politics. We believe the New Zealand public should be in a position going into the 2008 election where they know more about the commitment of individual politicians to just and compassionate policies on all of these issues across the MMP spectrum.

Our primary concern since the Hikoi of Hope held 10 years ago (in 1998) has remained constant. That concern is that the impact of all decisions taken by our elected public representatives and policymakers must be measured in terms of the quality of life of the most vulnerable in our society.

We know from the work of our social service arms affiliated with the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services that many members of our society are still suffering from the effects of economic policies that were put in place by successive governments in previous decades and that lacked a sufficiently strong social conscience.

The period before an election is a unique opportunity to intensify discussion about the type of society we live in. From our shared Christian perspective our starting point for the type of society we want to live in is a conviction that our humanity is constituted most profoundly by our relationships with each other and a commitment to the common good. Decisions that are fuelled by self-interest serve only to perpetuate a society that is marked by a division into the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots. This results in a society that leaves little room to include those who been pushed to the margins.

Any neglect of our responsibilities to our families and communities puts both our personal and societal wellbeing at risk. A broad view of who our neighbour is also encompasses our obligations as a member of the international community, and the continual seeking of new directions for the sake of future generations.

We hope and pray that we all strive more to put aside self-interest and to find a stronger collective social conscience in 2008. The message is simple: Let us look after each other - Aroha tētahi ki tētahi.

Archbishop David Moxon, Anglican Church
Rodney Macann, Baptist Churches of New Zealand
Archbishop John Dew, Catholic Archbishop of Wellington
Reverend Brian Turner, Methodist Church
Right Rev. Pamela Tankersley, Presbyterian Church
Commissioner Garth McKenzie, Salvation Army