



Take a Deep Breath – It's a Year of Action!

By Trevor McGlinchey, NZCCSS Executive Officer



The current National Led Coalition Government, with ACT, Maori Party and United Future as coalition partners, is in its second year of its second term in Parliament. It has set a busy legislative schedule as it moves towards implementing its policy goals during this calendar year. The government is intent on making solid progress

towards implementing its political agenda – believing the last Election gave it a mandate to do so. It also wants to ensure any unpopular legislation is enacted far enough out from the next General Election in 2014 to ensure any pain it causes is blunted in the minds of voters and that the hoped for positive effects of the policy programme are beginning to be seen.

Target-Driven

A big driver of government policy is the Better Public Service Targets. Most governments don't set hard targets because not achieving them gives too many scoring points for opposition parties in parliamentary and public debates. So this current government is being quite brave in setting these targets. Government policy is bent on achieving results which help achieve them. Policies such as: - Welfare Reforms, White Paper on Vulnerable Children, National Standards for Educational Achievements, and mergers of government agencies and reduction in size and scope of the Public Services, changes in contracting requirements for government funded providers of social services and a focus on more joined up approaches at both government and non-government levels are all part of the Better Public Services drive.

Capabilities and Outcomes

In the community social services sector the introduction of Investing in Services for Outcomes and its allied work stream the Capability Investment Resource are parts of this big picture. Government wants to fund community based services that contribute to its priority service areas – both in terms of what services are provided and where the services are located. Social service agencies will need to demonstrate they have the capability to deliver outcomes in these priority areas. While not a stated outcome of the Investing in Services for Outcomes project, it is likely the number of funded social service agencies will decrease as the provision is rearranged.

Who Can Write the Best Tenders?

When services are being reduced we see the use of the market being increased. So organisations will be openly tendering for programmes. The experience of some NZCCSS members

in areas such as ACC provision and in in home care services for older people is a huge reduction in the numbers of providers delivering services. No longer has their local knowledge and history of quality service delivery counted in the tendering process. Rather a well written tender document and the ability to provide services over a large geographic area seem to take precedence. While MSD has not directly indicated this type of model is their intention it is wise to be aware of other government department/agency purchasing models.

Shrinking Welfare Net

All of this is happening in an environment where more and more people need support. Yet at the same time changes to Housing New Zealand criteria and Welfare Reforms are making life harder for those who seek government assistance. No longer are people entitled to a certain level of social welfare support. These days someone must meet social obligations and work test requirements prior to being eligible to receive any support. This shrinking of the social welfare net is resulting in more and more demand being placed on Christian and other social service agencies.

We need your stories

This means that NZCCSS members are being stretched in multiple directions as they try and address funding and contracting changes and increased demand. NZCCSS is raising these issues at the highest levels. We need to gather your stories, particularly those around how the 'shrinking welfare net' is affecting your families and whānau. This information helps us in advocating for policies that make a positive difference for poor and vulnerable New Zealanders and the organisations that serve them.

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Canterbury Two Years On and Older People in the Region

By Philippa Fletcher, NZCCSS Policy Advisor

The full version of this article is online at
InSite Magazine www.insitemagazine.co.nz

Older people are a powerful force in Canterbury. Around 15.5% of the population is aged over 65, which is slightly higher proportion than for the whole of New Zealand (13.6%). Many older Cantabrians never expected to make use of Christian social services, but many have done so since September 2010. Older people in New Zealand have coped with many hard times before. Those a little over 70 lived through the war years; those a little over 80 lived through the 1930s depression. However, older Cantabrians have faced a new collection of struggles in the past two years: housing issues, mental health concerns, increased isolation, insurance difficulties, and the need to seek help.

Perhaps the trickiest is the last. Older people, who have found their way through many of the exigencies of life, often do not expect to be approaching social services for assistance in their later years.

We are getting older people who are really unwell presenting for the first time in their lives.

Older people who have got through everything until now.
(Vaughan Milner, CEO, Presbyterian Support Upper South Island).

Asking for help can be very hard:

People are coming to food banks who have never been before. People are beyond coping, and there is a sense of shame and humiliation
(Jolyon White, Anglican Care).

Service providers describe isolation and fear amongst seniors. Both cause stress, and stress affects people's health. It is not surprising St John Ambulance has seen large increases in the cardiac-related incidents since September 2009. Those in more earthquake affected areas report greater symptoms of depression than those in the less affected areas. Depression symptoms are often accompanied by a sense of helplessness, on-going post-earthquake disruptions, distress, anxiety, and increased alcohol consumption. Social services are assisting large numbers of people across the age range who have anxiety and/or are depressed.

Being unable to fix your house is enough to distress anyone. Older people in Canterbury often own their own homes and have put much of their lives into turning them into beautiful places reflecting both their love and creative energies. It is heart-breaking seeing a garden you have carefully tended ruined, and a home which you have cared for or where your children grew up in tatters. It is even worse when you are stuck waiting for the EQC and the insurance companies to make up their minds about what is going on. Or if you live in a neighbourhood where others have moved away. Almost two and a half years on, many are still waiting for useful news about housing.

You can see the sadness in their faces when they come in. One elderly lady came in crying one day and it turned out she had just been told her house was zoned blue-green
(Betty Chapman, Wainui Avonside Community Services Trust)

Housing people is not enough of a priority according to Canterbury services. Too many cheap houses are either unusable or have been demolished, and available houses have dramatically increased in price. Around 17,000 houses are being demolished; 110,000 houses are being repaired, including 15,000 costing in excess of \$100,000. Rents have increased markedly and there is a desperate need for affordable housing. Over 300 central city bedsits were written off, and 600 rest home beds lost (Methodist Mission).

There are 70 year olds taking out mortgages. How will they repay them?

(Brian Turner, Wainoni-Avonside Community Services)

Work and Income provides one-off food grants if people meet the criteria. Government is tightening access to social welfare, but it is notable that while overall food grant provision fell in Canterbury between June 2010, 2011, and 2012, special needs grants for food for superannuitants increased by 21% between June 2010 and 2011. Numbers of Canterbury superannuitants receiving Temporary Additional Support (the Government's weekly payment which helps someone who can't meet their essential living costs from what they earn or from other sources) were 11.6% higher in June 2011 than they had been in June 2010, and another 14% higher in June 2012.

Just like everyone else, older people need reason to



*Where have all the flowers gone?
We tend to forget the importance of beauty.
We need to patch things up now so we can carry on
and have some control in our lives, and then take the time required to create what is solid, built to last, and beautiful.*

hope. A wonderful man from Delta Trust pointed out the importance of beauty and making things usable while putting energy into the solid, creative and long term. Social services are around to help and older people's needs are just as important as everyone else's. As Christchurch City Missioner Michael Gorman says, the agencies do care, and will continue to work for the recovery of the area while working with those in immediate need.

**Read the Canterbury Report on our website:
www.nzccss.org.nz under Publications**



Home Support - What Can You Expect and How You Can Make a Complaint

During March the Ministry of Health will be publishing new information for consumers about home support services. The Ministry liaised with sector representative groups in preparing this information and they are asking for support in disseminating it.

The information is aimed at being easily understandable for the people receiving services and their families, friends and carers. The Ministry would like service providers and health professionals to include the information in the material they give to clients.

The leaflets include information about home support

services, how to involve family in your home support plan, how to improve home support services and how to raise a concern or complaint. It is important that people receiving government funded home support services understand who supplies home support services, what their rights are, and how the support needed will be planned and delivered.

The leaflets also explain why it is important to talk to someone about any problems with home support services and gives examples of how making a complaint can make a positive difference to home support services. The leaflets will be published online at www.health.govt.nz

National Dementia Cooperative



The National Dementia Cooperative (NDC) comprises an interdisciplinary group of people concerned with improving the standards of

care and support for people with dementia and their families/whānau /caregivers that was set up in November 2011.

The NDC is sponsored by BUPA, The Selwyn Foundation, Presbyterian Support and Good Partners (Invercargill) with additional support from Waitemata DHB.

Action groups, regional meetings and a website forms the basis of the co-op.

To join the network, contact national Coordinator Marja Steur at Marja.steur@cdhb.health.nz

wecanhelp.org.nz

Alzheimers NZ has launched a new campaign to help raise awareness about dementia. WeCanHelp aims to help those who have dementia or know someone who has dementia to have better access to the care and support they need. They want to dispel myths and misconceptions about the disease with the hope that people will seek help sooner and stigma surrounding dementia can be reduced. Find out more online at www.wecanhelp.org.nz/welcome

Legislation and Submissions

Careerforce qualifications review

The NZ Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is conducting a review of qualifications in all sectors and social services are under review right now. Sector ITO Careerforce is leading a sector engagement process and it is important that social service organisations and workers get informed about this. Find out more at www.careerforce.org.nz

Feed The Kids- Education (Breakfast and Lunch Programmes in Schools) Amendment Bill.

Please note the introduction of this Bill has been delayed and a new date has not been set. But the momentum in support of the Bill is growing and there is even the possibility of the Government picking up the Bill as one of its responses to the recommendations of the report of Children's Commissioner's Experts Group on Child Poverty. So keep contacting your MPs and political parties and follow the news on www.feedthekids.org.nz

Constitutional Advisory Panel

The public consultation stage of the government's review of our constitution has started. Information about how to make a submission to the review is available at www.ourconstitution.org.nz and the deadline for submissions is 1 July 2013.

Time For Change.



An important resource for the discussion on the place of the Treaty in our constitution is this booklet, written from a Pakeha perspective, 'Time for change: A framework for community discussion on values-based and Treaty-based constitutional arrangements' and it is available at www.converge.org.nz/pma/change.htm.



Premium Charging in Aged Care – Let's Have a Good Quality Public Debate

By Paul Barber, NZCCSS Policy Advisor



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If the Government refuses to pay any more for aged residential care, then who will end up picking up the costs? This is the debate we need to have. In the December issue of *Kete Kupu* we reported on the Government's discussion document on premium charging in rest homes. The brief submission period has closed, but NZCCSS believes the debate has just begun and it needs to be wider and understand the interrelationships within the aged care sector – housing, community support and rest homes.

In the face of the complicated and confusing proposals contained in the discussion document, NZCCSS believes that an alternative approach is required that is simpler to administer and more likely to produce fairer outcomes for residents and service providers.

No Help for the Most Vulnerable

We asked the simple questions: how will low income and vulnerable older people benefit from a proposal to allow some rest home providers to build “premium” facilities in which all the residents will have to pay an additional charge, over and above the current government subsidy of up to \$892 per week? And will the proposed changes be workable?

Well over half of older people do not have the income or assets that allow them to pay any premium. We conclude that they will not benefit from an increase in “premium-only” facilities because they cannot access them. We also concluded that the proposed management for standard rooms' availability is not workable and will simply add further complexity to an already highly complex service provision environment.

The pressure for premium charging has arisen directly as a consequence of government funding policy that rations funding for aged care through income and asset testing and the “maximum contribution” limit that means any resident receiving care that is government funded cannot be made to pay than that limit. That maximum limit is also the price DHBs pay to providers of rest home services, a price based

on what DHBs are prepared to pay out of their budgets – it no longer bears any relation to the real cost of providing rest home services.

We have made some suggestions, but there was not enough time to really test those suggestions with our wider networks and we wish to see this issue debated properly so that all those affected can agree on a fair way to share the costs of aged care.

There is no proper definition of a “premium room” because the government does not define a “standard room”, so the confusion and lack of transparency around additional charging will persist even if the proposed changes are made.

A better approach is needed

We suggest that it is poor prioritisation of limited government funding to subsidise facilities devoted entirely to serving people with the means to pay premium charges.

A better approach would be to target limited funding at meeting the full costs of standard services for those with few means. That would mean DHBs paying a higher price to service providers that reflects the real cost of services. At the same time they could recover more from those clients who have higher wealth and income through changes to means and asset-testing thresholds. This would enable aged care agencies with clients with low income to continue to provide a quality service. Not-for-profit providers are the operators who are least likely to be levying premium charges and most likely to be willing to build facilities not levying extra charges. This commitment cannot be sustained at funding levels that do not meet the costs of services.

Secondly, we suggest re-designing the means and asset-testing system to require those with higher incomes and assets to contribute more towards the costs of the services. This could be done in a number of ways. Steps along this path have already been taken when in May last year the Government arbitrarily froze the asset threshold at its current level. This was done without any consultation – now it is time to ask the public about asset thresholds and paying for higher cost services.

Move away from Ad Hoc Policy Making

There are other more long-term and substantive alternatives to consider such as social insurance premiums for aged care (successfully operating in Germany since the mid-1990s) and re-addressing taxation to enable health funding to be increased to meet rising demand for aged care.

It is time to move away from ad hoc policy making designed to “let off steam” at the top of the market and actually debate how to share the real cost of services fairly and in a way that will meet future needs.



The Wider Picture in Aged Care

There is a whole series of issues that form the background to this consultation:

- Underfunding of wider aged care and the move to greater home and community support, and a lack of suitable housing designed for independent living and supported living.
- Government health targets that prioritise clinical interventions (e.g. elective surgery), information technology solutions (e.g. information systems) and other “fix-it” policies (e.g. rheumatic fever amongst children) while not paying sufficient attention to robust research and policy evidence in decisions on Health of Older People funding and strategies.
- Ageing population and perceived pressure on health budgets: New Zealand is under prepared and lagging behind other countries especially in the development of non-residential forms care and support.
- Unwillingness to further invest in health funding: For a number of years it has been clear that the Government aged residential care subsidy lags behind the amount independent experts have calculated is necessary to cover the full costs of running an aged residential care operation, including the costs of reinvesting in building and replacing existing capacity (the “investment gap”). Both the previous Labour-led government and the current National-led Government have consistently refused to increase subsidy funding to a level that meets all costs of providing the service. As a consequence, the process of premium charging has become more and more common, where providers charge a “premium” to recognise the fact that the room and services provided go beyond the minimum required by the Government subsidy.
- It is an enticing “easy out” for Government to allow the private sector to simply get on and charge what it likes rather than offer further government funding and a more comprehensive funding policy and plan.
- Regional variations: the pressure to levy additional charges would seem to be focused in Auckland and other larger urban centres. In other areas there is little opportunity to supplement income through extra charges due to lower median income levels.
- How to ration services if the system is not prepared to fund the full cost of universal services? The current system uses three elements:
 - Price cap – applying across subsidised and private paying clients
 - Asset-testing – threshold now fixed on inflation-adjusted basis
 - NZ Super taken – from all older people receiving subsidised care.

All this means that consumers currently pay \$730 million (45%) of the total costs of aged residential care, with DHBs subsidies totalling \$910 million.

Not the Best Christmas Present – Southern Home Support Providers Dumped

The Southern District Health Board has done a clean out of its home support services including dumping a long-standing and much valued provider in Presbyterian Support Otago (PSO). In going from 17 providers down to three, the DHB included one entirely new provider to the region, Australian-based organisation Royal District Nursing Service. The unsuccessful tenderers received the news shortly before Christmas. The next two months saw much public outcry about the decision, including a petition of over 13,000 signatures urging the DHB to re-consider its decision. The Board ignored all such appeals and refused to discuss in any detail the reasons for its decision with PSO.

After considering a legal challenge to the decision, PSO announced that it will not attempt to get an injunction and will co-operate with the transition process. The Chair of the PSO Board re-stated their belief that the DHB decision is “unjust and the result of a flawed process” but that it would not be in the interests of their clients and staff involved to create further uncertainty. PSO has confirmed that it will continue its commitment to support older people in the community and to provide quality services that are flexible, responsive and meet the needs of older people.

There is bitter irony in the decision to implement the new service model designed to provide an enhanced and more flexible service, as this is exactly PSO has been advocating for and pioneering in the region for some years. Innovation, flexibility and community connection appear to have been sacrificed in the “bean counter” approach applied by the DHB.

Insight into the drivers of decision making may lie in documents such as Health Minister Tony Ryall’s letter of approval for the DHB’s annual plan that features an \$11million deficit. The Minister is putting the heat on DHBs to reduce deficits and the Southern DHB is in his sights as the only DHB with a deficit in its three-year plan. The Board has to find \$38million in savings and it seems that community connection and loyalty to long-standing service providers counts for little when your only concern is reducing costs.

What kind of future is there for community services for older people when the rhetoric of the Government includes focusing on investing in wrap around services for older people in home and community support services yet seeks to squeeze DHB budgets so tightly that DHBs continue to fund services so poorly?



The Price of Dignity and Participation \$18.40 - Living Wage Report Published



Faith communities and social services are among those leading the way in the campaign for a Living Wage in this country. This echoes the role that churches have played in other countries where the living wage idea has taken hold. Together with community groups and unions, a wide coalition of support is emerging. The release

of the Living Wage report attracted a storm of publicity and support from leading business commentators like Rod Oram. As Oram points out, we are “squandering our human talent” through low wages and increasing wages towards a living wage is an investment by businesses in their people, their productivity and their wellbeing.

The Anglican Family Centre researchers Charles Waldegrave and Peter King conducted the research to calculate a living wage for our country. The \$18.40 per hour wage was arrived at through a process that included working with focus groups of low income families discussing what was necessary to participate in 21st Century society. That the living wage is so far above the minimum wage, which is due to be increased to \$13.75 from 1st April, shows just how low wages are in this country. It is estimated around 740,000 wage earners receive significantly less than the minimum wage. As Peter King points out, all the talk of redistributing income seems to assume it has to be downwards from high to low income earners. Yet in fact, the move to a low wage economy in this country in recent decades has been in fact a redistribution of wealth from the lowest to the highest income earners.

The Catholic social justice agency Caritas is committed to support the principle of a living wage and is already taking steps to move its lowest rate of pay towards a living wage. Director Julianne Hickey says that we need to “overcome the growing inequalities between wealth and poverty, which reduce the health and wellbeing of us all. Addressing low wages is part of that work.” Both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches national bodies have voted to support the living wage campaign. The national leader of the Presbyterian Church, the Right Reverend Ray Coster, commented that a living wage “will reinforce the meaning and dignity associated with work. Many low wage jobs are vital to our society; we should not associate low pay with work of low value.” The Christian belief that we are all made

in the image of God means that people and their work have a dignity that makes the labour market significantly different from the purchase of other goods. The price of a person’s labour should not be determined solely by the market. Presbyterian minister Rev Dr Margaret Mayman adds that,

As people of faith, our task is not simply to offer charity to those who do not have the resources they need but also to examine the causes of poverty and engage in changing social policy and practices.

The economy was made for people, not people for the economy. Our faith tradition contains many stories that teach us that we are not created for competition but for generosity and community. It calls us to put people first.”

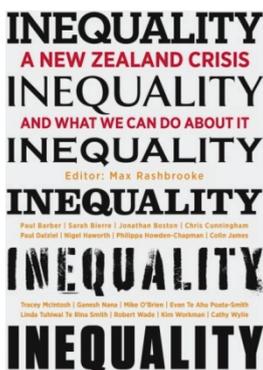
Implementing a living wage is a very practical project that employers can begin at any time. Private sector employers such as Wellington printing company Thames have committed to implement it and the example of London City’s widespread implementation shows that it can be done, even in difficult economic times. The Trust for London has commissioned a report that examines the costs and benefits of a London living wage. It concluded that there were significant benefits from reduced staff leaving rates, employees have better attitudes towards their work, financial benefits for staff and reputational benefits for the firms paying a living wage. The wage cost increases associated with up to 25% increases in lower pay were a modest 6% thanks to better work practices and reduced management overheads encouraged through introducing a living wage (www.geog.qmul.ac.uk/livingwage/).

NZCCSS is working with its member networks to advocate for better wages and conditions for those working in the social services sector, for example, through supporting the call for pay equity between DHBs and aged care workers. Full implementation of a living wage will need the government to agree to commit the funding necessary, but in the meantime, gaining support for the principle and identifying any steps that can be taken to improve wages and conditions are goals we can all work towards.

The Living Wage campaign is urging employers, faith communities, other community groups and individuals to show support for the living wage principle and encourage organisations you are part of to take action.

The report is online at www.livingwage.nz.org.nz/ and www.familycentre.org.nz/.

Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis and What We Can Do About It



Edited by Max Rashbrooke and published by Bridget Williams Books with the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services www.bwb.co.nz/books/inequality, NZCCSS is proud to be part of producing this new book due to be published in June 2013.

A staggering rise in wealth disparity has transformed New Zealand from one of the developed world’s most equal nations to one of the most unequal. So dramatic has been this shift from a

supposedly egalitarian society that the future has become difficult to grasp. What are the options for – and barriers to – tackling the gap between rich and poor? Inequality addresses these questions in the New Zealand context – a powerful argument from some of the country’s leading commentators. Contributors include Paul Barber, Sarah Bierre, Jonathan Boston, Chris Cunningham, Paul Dalziel, Nigel Haworth, Philippa Howden-Chapman, Colin James, Tracey McIntosh, Ganesh Nana, Mike O’Brien, Evan Te Ahu Poata-Smith, Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith, Robert Wade, Kim Workman and Cathy Wylie.

Keep an eye on Max’s website: www.maxrashbrooke.org.nz or www.CloserTogether.org.nz for more news on the book and inequality issues in this country.



Interest-free Loans – Nga Tangata Microfinance

Debt is one of the huge and crushing burdens heaped upon people on low incomes as they struggle to get by. Budget advisors around the country are constantly working to help free individuals and families from the impact of the often predatory activities of pay day loan companies and other non-mainstream credit companies offering easy credit at interest rates that can be more than 100%. There are many reasons why people turn to “loan sharks”, who are concentrated in lower income communities like South Auckland or Porirua, but the impact is to drive people even further into poverty. One key reason people use loan sharks is that there is no other source of credit.

For some years NZCCSS has been working with Child Poverty Action Group and the NZ Federation of Family Budgeting Services to develop a no-interest loans scheme aimed at offering an alternative source of finance for people who cannot access mainstream banking credit. A pilot

scheme has been operating in South Auckland, designed to develop an approach that works in the cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand and which can be shared with other communities around New Zealand. Supported by Kiwibank and based on an Australian microfinance model developed by the Order of the Good Shepherd, the scheme is still in its early days but received media attention in the NZ Herald just before Christmas. The Children’s Commissioner’s Experts Group on Child Poverty report recommended microfinance schemes as one way of helping to reduce child poverty. The Herald featured a family that has benefited from the scheme which involves eight local budgeting services working with clients who can borrow up to \$2,000 to pay for essentials like car repairs, fridges or washing machines.

There are a number of similar schemes in operating in New Zealand. Nga Tangata aims to be a proven model that is easy for other communities to pick up and implement, as a local response to inequality and poverty.

State of the Nation report

At the Wellington launch of the latest Salvation Army State of the Nation report *She’ll Be Right* we were treated to a panel of politicians’ insights about leadership. This was in response to the Major Campbell Roberts’ stinging critique of a political culture dominated by self-interest:

“A political and ethical perspective that starts with self-interest, with ‘what’s in it for me’, is bound to create a political culture that, in turn, has leaders who placate self-interest sentiments, even if these leaders are not self-serving themselves. If we measure progress just in self-centred material terms, we are unlikely to see value in the political ideas of those who advocate for future generations and a just society.”

What followed was a bit of a bidding war among those speaking as to who had had the most disadvantaged upbringing and some attempts to offer the vision and values that Major Roberts is calling for. We can only hope and pray that there will be a turning point in our social and political culture towards a more selfless and visionary approach.

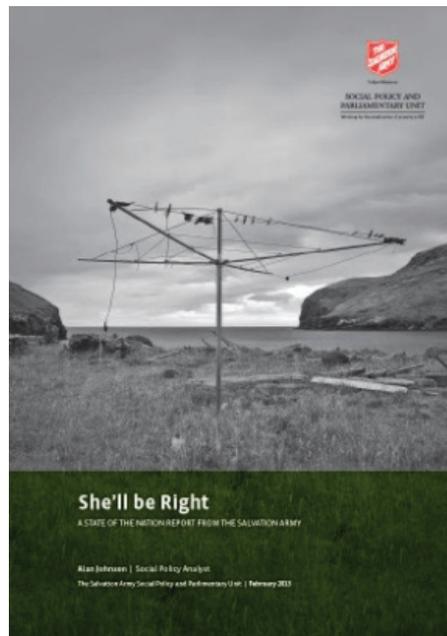
You can’t eat a budget surplus

There are 250,000 kids growing up without such vision at the moment and there is no time to waste. At present we as a nation seem content to let one fifth of our children suffer so that the Government’s budget deficit can be reduced. Education is the great hope of escape from the grip of poverty and inequality and the positive signs around slightly closing gaps in early childhood education and educational achievement are a tiny glimmer of hope for our children.

Hope for a turning point in social policy can be drawn from the first signs in a turnaround in justice figures. The government is waking up to the enormous tax and social costs of locking up too many people and finally the rate of imprisonment is dropping (if only minutely). Crime rates are dropping and even rates of re-imprisonment are also dropping.

In contrast the housing situation remains mired in unaffordability and shortage. Nearly two-thirds of households that are renting are in “housing stress”, paying too large a proportion of their income in housing costs. One clear reason for this is that the Accommodation Supplement maximum amount is not indexed to inflation or rental costs. Nearly half of renters receiving the AS are receiving the maximum amount.

Young people are bearing a savage burden in the employment market. The youth unemployment rate has nearly trebled since 2007 to 32% (nearly one-third of 15-19 year olds who are in the labour market.)



Tax is not a swear word

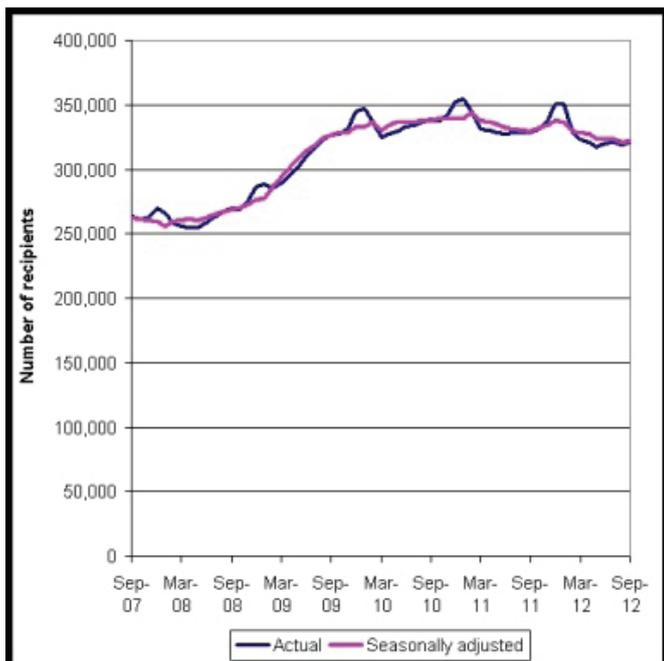
The report finishes with a call for more tax funding to support investment in the wellbeing of our children and wider community.

Read the full report online: www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-media/social-policy-and-parliamentary-unit/state-of-nation-reports/shell-be-right/



IS THE WELFARE SAFETY NET STARTING TO SLIP?

Vulnerability Report 14, January 2013



Total number of main benefit recipients

The widening gap between those reported to be without work and those who are receiving benefits along with the increasing demands placed on community organisations to provide emergency support may be pointing to a slipping welfare net”, says Trevor McGlinchey, Executive Officer of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS). “The release of the 14th Vulnerability Report indicates by the third quarter of last year the numbers of people on benefits had dropped across most benefit groups, yet the number reporting they were unemployed had grown by 19,000 people. In most areas the demands on emergency assistance and on ongoing basic support needs had reached new record highs.”

“The biggest recent changes that are likely to affect benefit take-up and demand for social services is the tightening of access to social welfare as the Welfare Reforms take effect,” said McGlinchey. “We are monitoring the effect of these Reforms on our community social service agency member network. While it is still early in the implementation period, there appears to be some increases in demand for services as people find the benefit support, which was once an integral part of New Zealand’s welfare net, harder to get. At this stage it may be as a result of the welfare changes going through a settling in period – or it may be that some of our most vulnerable citizens are no longer getting the support we expect for our fellow New Zealanders”.

“NZCCSS members and other community organisations are already struggling to meet present levels of demand. The further big Welfare Reform changes expected this year may result in some people not being able to get the assistance they need,” said McGlinchey. “If this happens we will see more families and individuals losing their homes, becoming unwell, not being able to access healthcare, unable to buy sufficient food, and in children moving from school to school as families seek emergency housing. We know that this is bad for our society and, as people and families in these situations require intensive and expensive ongoing support to get back on their feet, it is also bad for our economy”.

“The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services urges Work and Income to take a very supportive approach to implementing the Welfare Reforms and to ensuring that their clients’ wellbeing is paramount”, said Rod Watts NZCCSS Board Chairman. “NZCCSS social service organisations will do their best to support vulnerable members of our communities, but we cannot replace the government in ensuring all New Zealanders have their food, housing, energy and other basic needs met”.

Read the Vulnerability Report at www.nzccss.org.nz

2013 Events, Training and Conferences



A conference for social entrepreneurs and social innovators. Find out more www.socanz.co.nz

NZ Home Health Association Conference 2013 “Squeeze, stretch and flex: Home & community 2013”

11 – 12th April 2013,
Rendezvous Hotel Auckland
www.nzhha.org.nz/conference/

Age Concern Conference 2013 - “Connections”

CQ Conference Centre, Comfort & Quality Hotels
213 - 223 Cuba St, Wellington

16 April 2013

Contact national.office@ageconcern.org.nz

Dementia Beyond Drugs: Changing the Culture of Care

Introductory Workshop, Tuesday 21st May 2013
Alexandra Park Function Centre, Epsom, Auckland
Contact admin@edeninoznz.com.au

KETE KUPU WORD BASKET

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KETE KUPU - Word Basket

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