

## SOCIAL HOUSING SPECIAL Show me the houses!

'We hope to have more social housing but we still don't know how' could be a fair summary of recent announcements about the Government's intentions for social housing.

NZCCSS believes that we need a clear public commitment from the Government to ensure there are thousands more social housing units available as soon as possible to meet the immediate needs of 5,000 people waiting now for social housing and

an estimated 34,000 people in homelessness or insecure housing.

It appears that the Government believes that around the current level of social housing units is indeed 'enough' and funding is being firmly capped at a maximum of 65,000 subsidised social housing units by 2017 (about 5% more than currently). The government wants to see people moving through social housing faster and moving on into 'independence' in the private rental market or so-called 'affordable' housing ownership market. Government-owned Housing NZ Corporation (HNZC) properties will be used to boost the number of properties being sold in the 'affordable' market by redeveloping existing properties with more units on them.

### Housing summit: more social housing desperately needed

A recent summit of representatives nominated by church denominations met in Auckland to discuss the churches' possible response to the many changes happening to social housing. One thing everyone agreed on is that more social housing

is needed, a great deal more than we now have. NZCCSS President Lisa Woolley, who is CEO of Baptist community housing provider VisionWest told the *NZ Herald* that while some in the sector are wanting to do more they are also very cautious:

*"We don't have huge bank balances, so there still needs to be some way of funding the community housing sector to grow ... because the bottom line is we have to have more social housing."*

Given the desperate need at the lower end of the housing market for affordable social rentals, the priority must be to require that the number of social housing units grows considerably. The summit also was clear that any transfer of government-owned housing needs to ensure that the housing stays in some form of public/community ownership that is genuinely accountable to communities.

NZCCSS and others in the sector are doing all they can to get better results for low income tenants and will be seeking clear commitments to significant numbers of new social housing units.

Under the current Government plans it is hard to see many more social housing units actually being built, yet there will be enormous disruption and change to existing systems. The sheer scale of the changes taking place represent huge risks and also some opportunities for those involved – tenants, housing providers and funders. Overall It is hard to see the outcomes being hugely beneficial for those most in need of good housing. The work has the feel of another expensive exercise in rearranging the deck chairs on the social housing ship that is just too small. ■

## CONTENTS

### SOCIAL HOUSING SPECIAL

Where is the plan to grow Social Housing? . . . . .	2
Purchasing plan for social housing services – MSD . . . . .	3
Council housing vital for low income older people . . . . .	4
Vulnerability Report 20: Desperate housing situation and a rise in the working poor . . . . .	5
Giving care work its due . . . . .	6
Living Wage increases to \$19.25 . . . . .	6
Is C-minus good enough? . . . . .	7
Conferences: Philanthropy, Age Concern & HCHA . . . . .	7-8
Legislation and submissions . . . . .	9
Te Piringa Strategic Alliance . . . . .	10

## NZCCSS says 'No' to AISA

NZCCSS has said 'No' to a request to join an information sharing agreement for Children's Teams working with vulnerable children. NZCCSS believes that changes to the Privacy Act is a better way to deal with the privacy for those children.

Children's Teams are the new way of working with vulnerable children. These Teams are being rolled out

throughout the country as part of the Children's Action Plan. Vulnerable Children who don't meet the statutory 'in risk' definition to be investigated by Child Youth and Family, but who may be considered for referral to a local Children's Team may need to have a range of information gathered from their service providers to

continued page 8



flickr.com/photos/andym5855/1415715178793

## SOCIAL HOUSING SPECIAL

## Where is the plan to grow Social Housing?

Other than the vague promise that Housing NZ and community housing providers “collectively will provide more housing places than there are today”, the government has identified no targets or revealed no plan of how to get these houses. Despite releasing Cabinet papers, media releases and speeches, important details are not known.

No detailed analysis of the level of need and demand for social housing has been published. Valuable new information is now online giving a detailed breakdown by region and category of the 5,000 people in urgent or high need of housing who are on the social housing register. But the details of those already on a waiting list is not the same as a full analysis of current and future need for social housing, which is most certainly much higher.

The overall estimate from research by Otago University that there are up to 34,000 people homeless or in insecure or transitory housing. This suggests we need an extra 5,000 units as soon as possible and another 30,000 over a relatively short time period to overcome the highest housing needs. Most of those houses will have to be social houses and most of them will be needed in the main centres of

Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton and Wellington.

The sums do not add up. If HNZC plans to have less houses in three years, it is almost impossible to see how the community housing sector will be able to add the extra 4,000 units urgently needed (a doubling of its current size), let alone take on 8,000 units planned to be transferred out of HNZC.

**State House sell-off: the language of the market**

HNZC will be reducing the number of units it owns by 8,000 units to around 60,000 in the next three years. This year (end of 2015) the plan is to transfer 1,000–2,000 to registered Community Housing Providers (CHPs). What will happen with the other 6,000 units is not clear. Will they be transferred in 2016 & 2017 and remain as social housing or will they be sold into the open market? It is not clear that there are any social housing providers who could take on that volume of stock in such a short time period.

The Cabinet papers give mixed signals about how the Government understands the target for HNZC transfers market. The Cabinet papers describe CHPs as “organisations such as social support organisations like Accessible Properties, council subsidiaries and more commercial players”. This means that scenarios might include local authorities turning

their portfolios into CHPs by combining with existing CHPs or forming their own CHP subsidiaries so as to access IRRS subsidies. It might also mean some very commercial-looking “community” housing providers (e.g. Fletchers Community Housing Trust perhaps?). HNZC’s role is described in Cabinet Papers in highly commercial terms, a “competitive social housing market” with HNZC to become a “high-performing business” in a “contestable market”.

Transfers of houses will retain tenants and subsidies and it is planned to start in areas where demand is “stable” and there are CHPs interested in partnering. The plan is to run an open and competitive tender process in April following consultation in February and they will be looking for “fair value” in transfer prices (see below for details about the consultation meetings).

**Housing New Zealand redevelopments**

A review HNZC is underway to be finalised in the first half of 2015 and expected to yield higher new builds as well as sales in low-demand areas. It is planned to open up HNZC land to redevelopment with the “development of both social and affordable housing on former state housing sites” particularly in Auckland. The NZ Treasury’s Establishment Unit will manage redevelopment

## Getting clear on what we are talking about

**Social housing:** total of community housing, local authority & Housing NZ Corporation (HNZC) housing around 85,000 units. This is around 5% of all housing in NZ. Just to make things more confusing, the Government now defines ‘social housing’ as only those tenancies where an income-related rent is being paid, therefore excluding almost all community housing and local authority housing.

**State housing:** owned directly by the government through HNZC around 68,000 units.

**Community housing:** 4,000 community housing units, 13,400 local authority units (see Community Housing Aotearoa reports on housing stock).

**Affordable housing:** any form of housing that does not cost more than 30% of total household income after tax.

transactions by encouraging social housing providers to build social and affordable housing on HNZC land.

**Tamaki is the model**

Deputy Prime Minister Bill English is using the [Tamaki redevelopment](#) as the model for his plans. Over the next 10 years around 5,000 extra “affordable and social homes” are planned to be added to the current 2,800 HNZC houses in those Auckland suburbs. The main question remains – how many of those additional houses will be social houses? If most (or all) of them are affordable houses – will they be genuinely ‘affordable’ to low income families to rent or buy? The formal definition for housing affordability is that housing costs be no more than 30% of household disposable income. For people in South Auckland in January 2015 the median rent is 32.3% of median income

and the costs of mortgage 55.5% of median income to buy a lower quartile house at \$480,000. A person on the minimum wage or even a living wage will struggle to afford a deposit or mortgage of that size so rent-to-buy, shared equity and other housing assistance would be their only hope.

Binding guidelines on what “affordable housing” means (e.g. housing finance/rents not more than 30% household income) will need to be included in the redevelopment plans in Tamaki. The goals & aims of the Tamaki project seem indeed very laudable and community agencies in the area are cautiously optimistic that it is improving the situation for people living there – but it is only in the early stages. The experience of the Glenn Innes residents is mixed, and there are some still refusing to move out of the house their family has lived in all their lives. ■

## SOCIAL HOUSING SPECIAL

## Purchasing plan for social housing services – MSD

“how are we meeting the needs of poor & vulnerable New Zealanders?”

The above quote from the Cabinet papers about how Government should change its ‘messaging’ reads like a quote from any number of NZCCSS documents! It is to be hoped that this change in messaging goes beyond mere words.

The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) is now responsible for assessing people who need social housing and for purchasing the social housing units to house them. They do this by offering an Income Related

Rent Subsidy (IRRS) to the housing provider (either HNZC or a registered Community Housing Provider).

The housing reforms are described as having the aim to “reduce social deprivation” but no detail is supplied of how this will be measured or monitored. They also aim to reveal the “true costs of social housing” including costs of improved services to tenants, presumably recognising that quality social housing provision means being both a good landlord and providing additional support where it is needed.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is leading the work on monitoring and evaluation of the housing reforms. MBIE has prepared a “baseline monitoring report” with data on social housing supply & demand prior to the reforms and will report on first year of changes to Cabinet in September 2015.

## Assessing need for social housing

Since MSD took over the social housing needs assessment process from HNZC, they are claiming improved service delivery: shorter waits for assessment, shorter screening time, and doing more assessments than initially forecast.

In late February there are now more than 30 registered CHPS who can receive tenants through the social housing assessment process but

they have only been able to take up around 130 IRRS subsidies since the July 2014, because they can only receive IRRS for new tenants. This means it will be a slow process to build the number of CHPS receiving IRRS.

Less than 10% (24 out of 272) of tenants whose tenancies have been

**NZCCSS would like to hear from those on the receiving end of these services whether they feel service really has improved.**

reviewed by MSD have been able to move. Another 49 people have been “assisted to transition out of social housing” since July 2014. The small numbers being able to move are more evidence of how tough it is for low income tenants to find private market alternatives. MSD also comments that the effect of moving out of HNZC house into the private market (where IRRS is not available) creates high effective marginal tax rates, as the Accommodation Supplement (AS) is considerably less than the IRRS. This means people’s housing costs rise considerably once they rent in the private market. Almost half of people renting in the private market and receiving the AS need more affordable housing.

Numbers on the Social Housing Register (it is no longer called a “waiting list”) peaked after transfer

from HNZC, reaching 5,810 in June before starting to drop again towards the end of 2014 (4,964 in December). This suggests that MSD has been doing a better job at identifying needs and the register may now be a better indicator of real need (or it may simply mean they took a while to get up to speed and people were left waiting longer). A review of the (former HNZC) social housing needs assessment model currently being used is being done and a report is due March 2015.

Some insights are coming through combining the information about IRRS and AS:

- MSD believes there are 13,000 (20%) social housing tenants who have potential to move on in the short term.
- But 136,000 of AS recipients (47% nearly half) who are private renters require greater availability of affordable housing.
- MSD is also looking hard at how it can help to move the other 53% of AS recipients to “greater independence”.

MSD details a range of things being done to “to alleviate pressure on social housing market” including offering “recoverable assistance” for bond, rent in advance & letting fees for alternative housing; doing an additional 3,000 tenancy reviews in next two years; and putting more money into

emergency housing and completing a review of emergency housing by July 2015.

## Obtaining social housing where and when it is needed

The detail of the regional breakdown of the housing register is online and the next step is to signal where and how many social housing places MSD plans to purchase to meet its objectives. This “Purchasing Strategy” will go to Cabinet in March 2015 and be published in April 2015.

A Housing Assistance Reform Feedback Group (HARFG) has been formed by MSD to provide on-going feedback to the Ministry about the reform process. The group has met once in November 2014 and is due to meet again in late February. The small group includes VisionWest CEO Lisa Woolley, Community Housing Aotearoa Director Scott Figenshow, ComCare Housing Director Annette Sutherland & Auckland City Mission Director Dianne Robertson. New members Anne Hurawai (Ngāti Porou), Kara George (Ngāpuhi) and Trevor McGlinchey (NZCCSS) have been invited to join the group for its February meeting.

## “Pipeline” of new social housing supply

Social Minister Paula Bennett talks about the “pipeline” of social housing supply and gives the impression

### What the government spends on social housing & housing subsidies

**Accommodation Supplement (AS)** is paid to 290,000 households, a total **\$1,200 million**.

**Income Related Rent Subsidy (IRRS)** paid to 62,000 tenancies (130 to community housing tenancies, the rest to HNZC tenancies) a total of **\$718 million**.

HNZC stock valued at **\$18,700 million** but about one third in wrong place or wrong type to meet need.

## SOCIAL HOUSING SPECIAL

of believing there is enough “coming on line”. Looking at actual hard numbers available, it is difficult to share her optimism.

In 2013 HNZC set a target of building 2,000 new units by the end of 2015. By December 2014 it had built only 326 of those and is committed to a further 1,039 by December 2015, so it will fall about 600 short of that target, if it achieves it at all. HNZC says that 88% of the new houses HNZC will build over next 10 years will be in Auckland, Tauranga, Hamilton,

Wellington and Christchurch – but it does not disclose how many houses it plans to build over that time.

Over the past three years CHPS have built over 200 houses of a total of 890 funded through \$139million in grants from the Social Housing Unit and the rest are also “in the pipeline”. But the “pipeline” is now running on a trickle with capital funding slashed to only \$10million per year for the current and future two years.

#### Subsidy Instead of Capital Grants: What is the future of the IRRS?

The Government seems to believe that paying a ‘market rent’ (based on the lower end of the rental market) through the IRRS is sufficient basis to enable CHPS to make the multi-million dollar and 30 or more year decision to build social housing. Currently around 62,000 IRRS subsidies are paid (almost all to HNZC) and the plan is to increase this number by 3,200 over the next three years. The intention seems to be that community housing providers will have access to most of these additional subsidies, as HNZC will be reducing its housing stock.

Currently IRRS is only offered to new tenants in CHPS and given the relatively low turnover in community housing groups, without policy changes the number of IRRS taken up by the sector will remain relatively low.

The Government budget for IRRS is however capped and how it is

### Council housing vital for low income older people

Housing for low income older people that is owned by councils stands before an uncertain future in the midst of the social housing reforms taking place. In 1938 Christchurch City Council was the first local authority to develop purpose-built pensioner housing. Other councils around the country followed suit over the following decades.

Today around 13,000 people live in council-owned housing and the overwhelming majority of them are older people, according to the latest report from research agency CRESA prepared for Community Housing Aotearoa. Their report on local government stock notes that 95% of councils target their housing at older people or older people with some other vulnerable group.

Several councils such as Hamilton and Whakatane are putting their social housing up for sale and in doing

allocated (what areas & types of houses) will be determined by the Ministers of Finance and Social Housing. It will not be in response to overall housing need and will mean changes to how IRRS is defined. Legislative changes are planned to “increase flexibility over what IRRS can be used for” but no more details have been made public. ■

so placing the future of secure and affordable tenancies for low income older people in their communities in doubt. Both councils are aiming to sell their stock to “social housing” providers, but it is not guaranteed that those organisations are ready and willing to take on housing or that it will stay as housing for older people. The debate on the over 300 units in the Hamilton housing stock reads like a summary of the overall debate about social housing: why should councils divest of an important service and social responsibility? Why not work with central government to expand social housing supply instead of seeking to “off-load” stock on a sector still in its early stages of development?

#### Still too few alternatives

Older tenants in South Auckland council housing are facing significant rent rises of up to \$30 a week, according to the Manukau Courier. Auckland City is moving to standardise its basic rental at 30% of gross income up from the current



First pensioner flats in Christchurch, built in 1938. Te Ara Encyclopedia of NZ <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/32438/first-pensioner-flats>

25% that tenants in Manukau’s 492 units pay currently pay. Consultation with tenants is part of the Long Term Plan for Auckland aimed at increasing revenue by \$2.4million. As Age Concern points out, there are very few alternatives for older people on fixed incomes such as NZ Super.

The last thing low income older people need at present is further uncertainty. Social service and housing providers such as The Selwyn Foundation, Abbeyfield and Bays Community Trust are involved in a varied responses to older people’s housing needs. The Abbeyfield model of “flating for seniors” continues to offer a good option for some older people, while Bays Community Trust is exploring a different model of affordable shared housing for seniors at their Sunrise House in Auckland. Selwyn Foundation has invested its own funds in offering below-market rental housing in Hanson Close in Auckland. Exciting things are happening, but not on a scale that can replace the vital role that council housing plays in the wellbeing of older people. ■

### Public engagement on social housing transfers

Details of the public meetings being held around the country are on the Treasury website and the final three meetings to take place in March are listed below.

#### Wed 4 March 2015

2–4pm, Christchurch Addington Events Centre  
75 Jack Hinton Drive Addington

#### Thur 5 March 2015

11am–1pm, Dunedin Fullwood Room  
Dunedin Centre  
1 Harrop St

#### Thur 12 March 2015

10.30am to 12.30pm Wellington, Pipitea Marae  
55 Thorndon Quay



Tenants at Sunrise House. [www.bcht.org.nz](http://www.bcht.org.nz)

## VULNERABILITY REPORT 20

## Desperate housing situation and a rise in the working poor

While the official statistics paint a picture of a solid economy – good economic growth and more jobs, looking deeper shows how unequally the benefits of growth are being shared. The unemployment rate has not declined significantly with the unemployment rate for Māori (12.2%) and Pasific (11.7%) still around three times the European rate (4.1%).

Housing and food hardship is combined with more people in working households needing to seek out assistance from social services. NZCCSS Executive Officer Trevor McGlinchey, summing up the latest report commented, “while the numbers of people on benefits drop and the number of hardship and other special grants made by Work and Income decreases, the demand for food parcels, budget advice, family counselling and other supports from of Christian social services members continues to grow.”

### Food insecurity

**“Food demand is constant. It is very difficult to source regular funding to meet demand.” VisionWest**

In a land that prides itself on effective and efficient food production food insecurity is the raw end of inequality. The report captures the

lengths families go to find food, and the stress this places on relationships. For example, the number of special needs grants for food increased by 14.5% among Māori and by 9.9% for ‘other ethnic groups’ over the year to September 2014. NZCCSS member agencies told us about people desperate for food walking long distances for help and new clients approaching foodbanks who have otherwise been managing fine.

### Housing shortages – women & children most impacted

**“Unless we have a major increase in the number of houses available there is no answer. Overcrowding of two or more families is common practice.” Salvation Army**

Housing availability and affordability across the housing sector (emergency, private and state and social housing) remain strong concerns to our member agencies. Members report a dearth of emergency housing in general, and for women and children in particular, and the limited and unsafe options vulnerable women have when urgent housing solutions are needed. Sleeping in caravans, garages, cars and boarding houses are the ‘constrained choice’ of many families in New Zealand today.

While rents are up across all major centres (e.g. Christchurch 5.7%, Auckland 4%, & Wellington 2%) and increasing faster than incomes, there has been a small 1.6% decline in the accommodation supplement over the year to September 2014. It is not clear why official demand for this benefit is down when the need for assistance with housing as reported by our members is so high.

People renting in the private rental market face greatest insecurity. We heard stories about pregnancy, serious illness and the death of a spouse inviting no compassion among some private landlords. For some families subsidised state housing is the best solution to unaffordable private rents. However, the waiting list is huge with 4,964 (Dec 2014) listed on the state housing register. Member agencies report a sense of hopelessness among a group of people for whom renting in the private sector is genuinely ‘out of their league’, leaving them with few dignified, clean and safe housing options.

### Young people still slipping through the gaps

Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) figures for 15–24 year-olds shows a decline of 3,500, but it is still Māori (20.2%) and Pasifika (18.2%) young people who much more affected than European

(9.6%). Over recent years there has been some significant commitment by government to improve this situation, including the introduction of Youth Services to provide wrap-around support to teen parents and beneficiaries to engage in education, training and ultimately employment. Despite all of this commitment, members still report that some youth continue to slip through the cracks and receive no support or income. More work is needed to understand why this is occurring and how these young people are surviving. The stories from young parents who attended parenting programmes at [Te Waipuna Puawai](#) give some insights about what kind of support works best for them.

As the number of people on benefits trends down, we hear about parents juggling work and childcare responsibilities, particularly those with special needs children, and children with behavioural challenges. Childcare centres have been hailed as the solution for these working mothers. For some parents, developing positive parenting skills and life skills is far more likely to have long-lasting benefits to both child and family than focusing solely on mothers returning to work.

### The economy of life as an expression of koinonia



“The economy of life embodies God’s vision of koinonia (community, communion, joint participation and sharing). It is a place where all people have a dignified, clean and safe place to live and die among family and friends who love and share life with them; where work has dignity and wages are fair and just; where justice is done, mercy is loved, and all work humbly with God; and where the Earth’s beings – plants ... seas, lakes ... rivers ... live in the integrity God has made.”  
*The World Council of Churches, 10th Assembly, October 2013*

**Vulnerability Report**  
This report draws on feedback from our social service members and official data from government agencies to provide a snapshot of the levels of vulnerability and resilience that exist within relationships, family/whānau and communities. It is not meant to replace the development of comprehensive policy responses that support all New Zealanders to build strong relationships with each other, and within their communities. Data included in this edition reflects qualitative feedback and official data collected in September 2014. Some December 2014 data has been included where available.

**Economic equity enables people, families/whānau and communities to flourish**  
Official data points to a solid economy with a 1% increase in the September 2014 quarter (1.2% over the year). The number of people employed increased by 2,000 (1.2%) over the year to September 2014 and the unemployment rate decreased to 5.4% (4.2% since September 2013). On the surface these statistics look promising but questions about economic equity and ethnicity remain. This report explores the population groups which are least likely to realise national averages. Employment rate: European (6.7%), Māori (5.1%), Pasific (11.7%), Unemployment rate: European (4.7%), Māori (12.2%), Pasific (11.7%) (Statistics New Zealand).

**Food security enhances relationships and community well-being**  
Focus on increased hardship remains a consistent theme from our member agencies with families (both the work and not at work) struggling to afford basic necessities, particularly those unexpected costs associated with children. In a land that prides itself on effective and efficient food production food insecurity is the raw end of inequality. This report explores the lengths families go to find food, and the stress this places on relationships. It also explores the strong cultural traditions of food sharing among Māori whānau and

**People desperate for food often with a long way as they don't have money for transport. Food can be as straightforward – but it's not just having limited resources. Salvation Army**  
“Food demand is constant. It is very difficult to source regular funding to meet demand.” VisionWest

### Getting help early: preventative services

**“People are not going to doctors as this is not seen as a priority when they have to pay for rent and food.” City Mission**

Children and families/whānau do not suddenly become vulnerable and at-risk overnight – there is generally an escalation of vulnerability and risk over many years. Preventative and universal health services are vital to help get in early yet there are signs these kinds of services are under pressure as government seeks to channel funding to the high-needs vulnerable children in the roll-out of Children’s Teams.

The interface between Work & Income and the health system is still challenging for some with doctors visits unaffordable for families and others face in understanding and fulfilling Work and Income obligations for medical certificates.

[Read the full report on our website.](#)

# Giving care work its due

Yet another carer pay court case has won in the Employment Court. This time it is for home care relief worker Jan Lowe who worked in the 1990s providing 24 hour care relief breaks for family carers. The challenging work with people with Alzheimers or other disabilities was paid on the basis of an “allowance” of \$75 for 24 hours (\$3 an hour). The Employment Court has ruled they were providing a service to the Ministry of Health and thus were eligible to the minimum wage and holiday pay.

Coming after the “sleepover” settlement for disability carers, each decision helps to build the case law that gives full recognition to the work of caring and offers the chance to ensure people doing this work receive a fair wage. As with the “sleepover” case, the onus is on the government to come up with a settlement with the workers that is fair to them. It is to be hoped that the Court’s decision will not be appealed by the government, but rather a negotiation process is undertaken to settle the issue.

The ‘In-Between Travel Time Settlement’ for home and community support

workers could serve as a model for this, with the Government, Ministry of Health working through a process with sector employers and workers that offers real hope for better working conditions, training and appropriate funding models.

Similarly, it is hoped that the government will not go down the path of trying to legislate out of a settlement in the Equal Pay case for rest home care worker Kristine Bartlett. Shortly before Christmas the Supreme Court refused the petition from employers TerraNova to appeal the Appeal Court decision, meaning that a process needs to be found to work out principles to assess a comparable

form of work done by men with the same or largely the same skills and compare pay rates.

The ongoing injustice behind this legal action is lack of pay equity – the fact that women’s work is less valued and therefore paid less than work dominated by men. Aged care is one place where this difference is most acute. The government funds the aged care sector on the basis that it pays care workers considerably less than if those care workers were directly employed by the government (e.g. working for DHBs). The different in hourly rates is said to be in the order of \$2 per hour. Aged care sector magazine InSite reports

rumours that the government is considering changing the Equal Pay Act in response to the court decision. Human Rights Commissioner for Equal Employment Opportunities, Dr Jackie Blue, convenes the Caring Counts Coalition that NZCCSS is part of and she has made the offer to government to help develop pragmatic and sustainable solutions that work for everyone involved. ■



Living wage employer La Boca Loca hosted the announcement of the 2015 revised living wage rate on 24th February. The Wellington living wage campaign supporters joined in the fun to celebrate the success of the movement in lifting wages for low income workers. We were also there to continue to our commitment to a fun-filled and positive vision for workers in this country that has changed the debate about wages from ‘how low can you go’ to ‘what is the best we can do for workers and their families.’

It is surely no coincidence that the Government announced a 3.5% increase in the minimum wage or 50 cents per hour the very next day, thereby actually closing the gap between the living wage by 5 cents an hour! Would the increase have been this much without the pressure to lift low wages, with inflation at 0.8%

and average earnings rose by 2.5%. A minimum wage of \$14.75 per hour is still too low, \$4.50 per hour (\$180 per week) less than the living wage, that is based on what workers and their families need to get by and participate in our society. Read more about the [2015 update for the Living Wage](#) and listen to Anglican Bishop of Wellington [Rt Rev Justin Duckworth talk to Mark Sainsbury](#) about what the Living Wage means for us.

Find out more about becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer at [livingwage.org.nz](http://livingwage.org.nz). ■



# Is C-minus good enough?



A quick overview of the latest *Salvation Army State of the Nation Report* shows more thumbs up symbols than thumbs down. Does this mean things are getting better for the most vulnerable in our country? In vital areas like housing, child poverty and family violence, the answer is 'not really'. When an improvement is from 'D' to 'C-' is that really good enough?

## Violence still not OK

Violence and neglect offences towards children are up and Major Sue Hay from the Salvation Army Policy Unit says:

**"New Zealand still has a culture of violence where it is seen as more acceptable than it needs to be."**

While it is very welcome news that notifications of suspected and neglect

child abuse have dropped, assaults against children have risen, leading to a 'D' grade for addressing violence against children. Recorded offences against children for violence, treatment, or neglect increasing 3.5% last year to 5,397 – 56% higher than in 2009. The only beacon of hope in this story is that perhaps such assaults are being reported more often, as people become less tolerant of violence towards children.

## Child poverty shows little improvement

The Prime Minister has declared child poverty a priority (or is it "children in hardship" or, as the Minister of Social Development euphemises "children that are perhaps not experiencing the full life that we all want for New Zealand children") and this report shows how little progress his government has made in its 6 years in office. Reducing the number of children in families reliant on benefits to 189,000, 40,000 fewer than 6 years ago, looks like quite an achievement – but what kind of achievement?

The question is – are those children better off as a result? The overall child poverty figures are not dropping, with most child poverty measures showing no significant decrease since 2009, because it appears so many working families are also living in poverty. As Mike O'Brien from CPAG

points out: says, "A fall in the number of families on welfare is not a reason to celebrate on its own without clear evidence that the children are better off because of it. A significant number of families experiencing poverty are in paid work (40%) so a reduction in the numbers on welfare may not mean any decrease in poverty."

So, while employment, average incomes, and food poverty have all shown 'modest' improvement, this is nowhere enough to overcome the huge problems of poverty and housing.

## Low income families missing out in housing

Housing affordability and availability as well as housing related debt continue to receive low marks on the Salvation Army scorecard, rating 'D' or 'C-'. The biggest problem is the supply of affordable housing in Auckland and Christchurch. Although the number of houses being built is increasing, the houses being built are not affordable to low income families and this is leading to overcrowding and declining health in some communities. In Auckland, the number of new houses being built is not keeping up with population growth, so the gap between affordable housing that is needed and what is being built continues to grow.

"We need immediate intervention, leaving it to the market is not working," says Major Sue Hay. She is also skeptical about the Government's proposed changes to social housing (see page 1 and following), which involves an increased role for charities

and community providers and doesn't look workable based on the detail released so far.

Read the full report 'A Mountain All Can Climb' on the [Salvation Army website](#). ■



**PHILANTHROPY  
SUMMIT 2015**  
Understanding the 21st century donor  
*Te korowai o te ngakau tangata*

University of Auckland, 17 April 2015

This one-day event, organised by Philanthropy New Zealand, provides those working in the not-for-profit sector with a unique opportunity to hear about the changing philanthropic landscape, and what they might need to do to adapt to these changes. They will also be able to take part in face-to-face meetings with some of New Zealand's leading grantmakers in a world café setting. The event will feature several of the keynote speakers from our biennial conference for grantmakers and funders, the Philanthropy Summit 2015: The Power of Strategic Giving, being held in Auckland on 15 & 16 April. They include leading US

philanthropic advisor Peter Hero and US grantmaking expert Mae Hong.

New Zealand speakers include experienced grantmakers such as Jennifer Gill and Kate Frykberg, as well as those who provide support to the not-for-profit sector such as Kate McKegg and Jo Garner. They will lead workshops and panel discussions on subjects ranging from what constitutes effective philanthropy to measuring impact and how to run a successful social enterprise.

This one-day conference is the final event of the Philanthropy Summit 2015, being held at the University of Auckland in April 2015.

[Information about fees can be found here.](#) ■

## NZCCSS says 'No' to AISA ... continued from page 1

assess their eligibility for acceptance into a Team. In order to achieve this health, education and social services workers are being asked to be more sharing of their clients' information. The [Approved Information Sharing Agreement](#) (AISA) is the mechanism

for creating a legal capacity for appropriate information to be shared with the Children's Teams to enable this referral assessment to be made. In essence it is a legal 'work around' the requirements of the Privacy Act.



flickr.com/photos/deknow/381455347

In order not to have to create a new schedule of organisations who have agreed to be part of the AISA process every time an organisation wants to join (or leave) the AISA arrangements, "umbrella organisations" like NZCCSS have been asked by the Children's Action Plan Directorate to

be a Representative Party and sign off on the AISA on behalf of their members. After feedback from Council denominational representatives, the Child and Family Policy Group and a range of member social services organisations. NZCCSS has declined the offer to be a Representative Party to the Approved Information Sharing Agreement.

While NZCCSS agrees that the controlled sharing of appropriate information regarding vulnerable children does have the capacity to provide families with the support they will need in order to become more resilient, we do not agree the AISA and the Representative Party arrangement will achieve this. We believe that in order to give confidence to health,

education and social services professionals, their professional bodies and educators a clear change in the Privacy Act is required. The AISA legal 'work around' is unlikely to give the level of confidence to create a changed ethical and practice framework regarding information sharing.

### Local Level Children's Teams

NZCCSS realises that a number of its members, in order to participate in Children's Teams at a local level, will agree to signing off on the AISA agreements through other Representative Parties. However, at a national level NZCCSS will continue to promote a change in the Privacy Act as the best, clearest and most efficient mechanism to provide

appropriate protection for the privacy of vulnerable children and their families. This change will also give social services professionals real confidence to change their information sharing practices in order to increase the wellbeing of our children.

Changes to the Privacy Act should include intensive engagement with the sectors involved and be followed up with well-resourced training to ensure the new approaches are well understood. Throughout this process it will of course be critical to ensure any sharing of information is appropriate, is only for the purposes of ensuring the vulnerable child and family are properly engaged with, and is conducted in a well-controlled environment. ■



## Children's Action Plan

Identifying, Supporting and Protecting Vulnerable Children



**Celebrating Age**  
Act locally, think globally

Age Concern 2015 Conference: April 21 & 22

The Brentwood Hotel, Wellington

This will be a wonderful opportunity to collectively celebrate the contributions of all Age Concerns to older people in New Zealand, as well as celebrating the contributions

of older people themselves. The Celebrating Age conference will be a vibrant and dynamic event, with a range of speakers, including Dr Natalie Jackson with a keynote address on the patterns of an ageing

population, as well as a number of practical, hands-on workshops. The interactive nature of the conference means that you will be listening to speakers you want to listen to and attending workshops that are of the most interest to you in your field of work, within the themes of Technology for social impact, Older people in context, Organisational sustainability and Leadership and governance.

Find out more on the [Age Concern website](#) or contact [national.office@ageconcern.org.nz](mailto:national.office@ageconcern.org.nz) ■

**FACING CHANGE**  
HCHA CONFERENCE **2015**



**28-30 April 2015**  
Rendezvous Grand Hotel  
Auckland

The HCHA Conference 2015 will explore the challenges and opportunities of changes occurring in home and community services – as a result of consumer and cultural needs, demographics and choices; and as a result of strategy around workforce, community supports and

integration. We will include consumer and carer perspectives and look at what is going on overseas, as well as economic and social perspectives at home. Make sure you diary this conference, it will be a cracker!

Find out more and register on the [conference website](#). ■

# Legislation and submissions

## Pokie machine gambling law changes

### Making pokie trusts more accountable to their communities

Gambling is one of those the many pressures and issues the people face that NZCCSS member agencies work beside. We are regularly receiving reports from around the country about the hardships that are compounded by addictive pokie machine gambling.

The latest gambling legislation, Gambling Amendment Bill (No.3), is being considered by the Government Administration Select Committee and aims to further control pokie machine (Class 4) gambling. The Bill is follow up to the consultation process on gambling regulations that took place in 2013 and NZCCSS submitted detailed comments into that process. So we looked at this new Bill to see if our concerns have been taken account of and are reflected in the proposed legislation.

### Will this help reduce gambling harm?

Gambling does a great deal of harm in our communities and it affects every walk of life, but its effects impact unequally:

- 56% of all gambling losses occur in the most deprived communities
- Up to 60,000 problem gamblers and tens of thousands of other family, whānau and friends are impacted
- Pokie machine gambling is highly addictive and a huge proportion of pokie users are already or are at risk of becoming problem gamblers. This is a dangerous stuff we are seeking to regulate here.
- There is continued concern that the proceeds of gambling still are not being directed sufficiently to the places where the harm is being done.

While the Bill is not specifically focused on gambling harm reduction, it would be a tragedy if measures in this Bill did open up possibilities that could lead to further harm.

### Mystery shoppers show need to tight regulation

The Department of Internal Affairs reported in December 2014 on its “mystery shopper” visits to pokie venues. Almost all of them did little or nothing to intervene in obvious problem gambling behaviour. That suggests a sector that is not yet ready for a “lighter hand of regulation” and as a result NZCCSS opposes the

proposal to allow venues longer license periods of up to 3 years.

In addition, the proposal to allow venues to be paid on a commission basis based on turnover is concerning. Any incentive that pays a venue based on turnover immediately runs the risk of providing an incentive for that venue to increase turnover through gambling. The runs directly against the intention of the Gambling Act which is to reduce harm.

### Transparency from pokie trusts about who decides and who gets what

NZCCSS supports the measures in the Bill that require more detailed reporting by pokie trusts. The intention is to standardise the info and make it more comparable and more widely available. Community agencies are caught between a rock and a hard place – because there are so few alternatives to pokie money, many groups that would gladly go elsewhere need to seek funding from such trusts. So it is important that this money is used to benefit those most affected.

NZCCSS suggested more clarity in the Bill to ensure that pokie trusts really do get the information out into the communities they are working with. Web-based reporting is important and necessary but the digital divide in our country means that the

poorest communities most affected by gambling have the lowest access to online media. Therefore, using free local papers to publish who they gave grants to and who was turned down, as well as information about how much money was lost on pokies in that community and how much money returned in grants might help achieve this.

Oral submissions are still being heard by the Select Committee, so find out more about the Bill at the [Action Station website](#) or [Problem Gambling Foundation](#).

[Read our full submission online](#)

## Police vetting money-go-round

Robbing Peter to pay Paul. A money merry-go-round. These are some of the ways Helga Wientjes, Chair of ComVoices grouping of community & voluntary sector organisations, describes the police vetting legislation before Parliament. NZCCSS Executive Officer Trevor McGlinchey was among the submitters trying to persuade the Select Committee to change clauses in the legislation.

The Government is increasing the extent of the requirements for police vetting of volunteers and staff working with children. There is wide



support for this approach to help improve the safety of children but the NZ Police are understandably concerned about the additional administrative burden a greatly extended vetting system will place on their work. The Police (Cost Recovery) Amendment Bill that is currently before Select Committee proposes to charge on a cost recovery basis for the police vetting service.

NZCCSS in its submission pointed out that setting up a payment system where most of the work is done by government-funded organisations creates a deep and expensive inefficiency. In essence, one government agency, the NZ Police will be setting up a charging system (that currently does not exist) to charge community and voluntary groups for police vetting who will have to account for and pay for this service out of government-funded contracts. This will further add to the administrative workload of both the Police and the social service organisations – effectively adding “transaction costs” on top of the actual cost of administering police vetting.

## LEGISLATION AND SUBMISSIONS

Without additional government funding the level of service provided to New Zealanders in need will decrease. This is likely to create pressure on government to pay more to compensate for both the vetting cost and the organisational costs in making this payment.

### A better way

A better system is to fund the Police directly for the cost of regular vetting. Particularly for services which are government funded and for which government has created a legal requirement for this vetting to occur. There is no “market” for police vetting, it is a legislative requirement for the organisations involved and can only be done by the NZ Police.

Simply funding the police for the additional cost of administering the additional vetting applications makes more sense and ensures that no further funding is directed into administration costs in organisations that are focused on delivering services to children and their families.

[Read the full NZCCSS submission on our website.](#) ■

## Te Piringa Strategic Alliance

**T**e Kāhui Atawhai o te Motu (TKAM) and the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) formalising a Strategic Alliance between the two organisations. This signing occurred at the AGM of NZCCSS on 19 November 2014. The MoU states that TKAM and NZCCSS:

... agree that working together is more effective towards a better future, where communities are engaged and actively participating in shaping New Zealand to be a vibrant country, where the Treaty of Waitangi, the empowerment and holistic wellbeing of whānau, hapu and iwi along with the right of poor and vulnerable New Zealanders to social justice and compassion are promoted and protected.

The joining of the two organisations in a Strategic Alliance has been supported by the Working Together More Fund which provided funding to help support the first year's work programme for 'Te Piringa' the name selected for the alliance.

Te Piringa is the coming together in an informal strategic alliance of Te Kahui Atawhai o te Motu and the New Zealand Council of Christian

Social Services. The word 'piringa' has two main definitions, 'a connection or relationship' and, 'a safe haven'.

The intention of the alliance between these two organisations is grounded in these meanings:

- Iwi/Māori social services providers are concerned with and working towards the wellbeing of their whānau. Christian social services providers also work with and are concerned with the wellbeing of their Māori whānau clients.

Through the development of a relationship the two organisations will provide an opportunity for connection and relationship between these important groups in their communities – bringing together groups with mutual clients and similar aims to achieve improved wellbeing for their whānau and for those they serve.

- Te Piringa will provide a safe haven where iwi/Māori and Christian social services groups, currently forced through the existing funding systems to become competitors for decreasing social services resources, can explore how they can work together to benefit their clients and communities. This may include research and advocacy – working together at a national level to provide good practice exemplars and advocating for structural change. ■



Stanley Walker (Chairman, Te Kahui Atawhai o te Motu) and Lisa Woolley (President, New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services) signing the Memorandum of Understanding to create Te Piringa.

## Kete Kupu Word Basket

ISSN 1174-2514 (Print)  
ISSN 1174-2526 (Online)

The newsletter of the NZ Council of Christian Social Services  
PO Box 12-090, Thorndon,  
Wellington 6144

3 George Street, Thorndon  
Wellington

If you would like to receive this newsletter in a different format (by email, mail or both) please contact NZCCSS (04) 473 2627 or [admin@nzccss.org.nz](mailto:admin@nzccss.org.nz)

Acknowledgements: In addition to its member subscriptions, NZCCSS extends its thanks to: JR McKenzie Trust, TG Macarthy Trust, Tindall Trust and Think Tank Trust for the grants and donations that help to make the work of NZCCSS possible.

Disclaimer: Every effort is made to ensure the correctness of facts and information in this newsletter. However, we cannot accept responsibility for any errors. Items from this newsletter may be freely copied provided the author and the sources are acknowledged.



New Zealand Council of  
Christian Social Services