

The newsletter of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services

Being Smart About What We Do

TREVOR McGLINCHEY

During the year the Council of NZCCSS has applied a sharp focus to developing strategic imperatives for 2015–18.

This is the third cycle of strategy-setting in my time as the executive officer at NZCCSS, so I thought it would be helpful to reflect on an activity that isn't just a paper exercise

– but rather guides our work each and every day.

Each strategy coincides with changes that occur with each cycle of Government, the environment that creates and the influences this has on the social justice landscape for the people our members serve.

For this cycle it's notable that our approach has been reframed, and we haven't done that in a vacuum. We have weighed up members' views on issues, on the strengths and weaknesses of NZCCSS and expectations.

The new strategy essentially captures our modes of responding to the environment we operate in; in ways that mutually fit with and support members.

We are a small organization and we have to be smart about what we do. We know the difference between

trying to lead something on your own and being part of a larger whole in conjunction with others.

Our five imperatives are simple to remember: **Hope, Positive Change, Lived Experience, Voice, Resilient.**

In addition the text that details the strategy – reproduced in full in this issue of *Kete Kupu* (see pages 2–3) – is less than 400 words. Every word counts, and provides the active vocabulary that helps us set the tone of our communications – from articulating issues to influential decision makers to preparing submissions.

Implicit with the voice that we exercise, is the emphasis we give to listening. When we're seeking to be heard by those in power we can only do that job effectively if we remain absolutely grounded in the feedback loops we have in place, and the 'little

data' about Lived Experience we can collect and deploy.

I believe our new strategy is one that has become less about structural imperatives than a few years ago, and that now drives more towards the shared values that ultimately help to empower Council and the NZCCSS Secretariat.

With this clear guidance we also have a clear responsibility to model the positive change needed to stay true to each imperative.

As we continue to implement these imperatives we will certainly be keeping Hope at the front of what we do, and carrying a message of Hope for a society that values human dignity and the common good.

Read the strategy on the following two pages. ■

More than just signing an MOU

A successful strategic initiative taken over the last year is the Te Piringa Strategic Alliance, as reported on in the March 2015 issue of *Kete Kupu*.

Te Piringa is the coming together in an informal strategic alliance of NZCCSS and Te Kahui Atawahi o te Motu, as supported by the Working Together More Fund | He Putea Mahi Tahī workingtogether.org.nz

This is an alliance that maps back well to, and is woven within the Strategic Imperatives that NZCCSS has set itself.

As a starting point a series of regional hui have been held for each side of the alliance to be introduced to each other and to build relationships – in some instances meeting for the first time.

Kete Kupu caught up with Miri Rawiri to gain some whakaaro on the alliance from her perspective as the executive director at Te Kahui Atawahi o te Motu:

“These hui have given us a venue for showing what collaborative

CONTENTS

The Productivity Commission and Quadrant D	4
Justice in Action: New resources to support action on social justice from the churches	7
Why we need to change the way we talk about poverty and inequality	8
Housing of All Kinds	9
Is Housing a Human Right?	10
The state of care and the modernising of Child Youth & Family	12
Best Place in the World To Die?	13
Inspiring stories, discoveries, challenges and frustrations	14
Legislation and submissions	14
Services for Older People conference	16

HOPE

NZCCSS carries a message of hope

POSITIVE CHANGE

NZCCSS works together with others for positive change

LIVED EXPERIENCE

NZCCSS articulates the lived experience of poor and vulnerable people

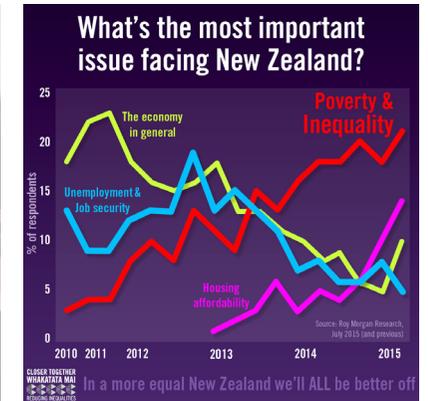
VOICE

NZCCSS is a strong and respected voice for member Christian social services

RESILIENT

NZCCSS is a resilient organisation with a long-term focus on social justice

continued page 8



MISSION

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services works for a just and compassionate society in Aotearoa/New Zealand. We see this as a continuation of the mission of Jesus Christ.

VALUES

In seeking to fulfil this mission, we are committed to: Giving priority to the poor and vulnerable members of our society; Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Developing an informed public opinion on matters related to social justice and service; promoting opportunities for membership involvement to demonstrate how social justice principles influence service delivery; representing our members in discussions with government and statutory bodies on relevant issues.



New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services



New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services

STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES 2015-18

HOPE

NZCCSS carries a message of hope

We promote a hope-filled society which values human dignity and the common good by:

- Supporting learning, development and transformation in whanau, families, organisations, communities and society
- Affirming achievement of iwi/Māori aspirations and goals
- Working towards a fair and equitable society
- Promoting aroha tētahi ki tētahi – caring for each other
- Encouraging a strengths-based approach to family, whānau and communities so they are empowered to determine and achieve their own outcomes

POSITIVE CHANGE

NZCCSS works together with others for positive change

We work with our members by taking a complementary focus and sharing our resources with other organisations, including community groups, advocacy organisations, umbrella groups, government and government agencies to:

- Promote strong and resilient communities
- Highlight issues of inequality
- Give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Increase family and child wellbeing
- Promote wellbeing for older people
- Increase access to healthy housing
- Address issues of poverty, exclusion and marginalisation
- Inform and critique emerging government policy from a social justice perspective
- Share good practice

LIVED EXPERIENCE

NZCCSS articulates the lived experience of poor and vulnerable people

We ‘connect policy to reality’ by bringing the lived experience of poor and vulnerable people to the attention of our wider communities, to government decision makers and to policy developers by:

- Providing analysis through relating the stories and experiences of those our Christian social services members serve
- Acting as a point of distribution and promotion of our members’ research and undertaking and publishing our own research
- Underpinning our advice to government, to policy makers and to policy implementers with the front-line experience of our members
- Providing feedback on the impacts of policies on our communities and families

VOICE

NZCCSS is a strong and respected voice for member Christian social services

We demonstrate we are an essential ecumenical meeting point for Christian social services and an invaluable resource to inform our members and our stakeholders, including our communities and government, by being valued for:

- Our strong Christian voice
- Our in-depth and meaningful relationships with our members
- Our thoughtful ecumenical engagement
- Speaking authentically from the perspectives of our Christian social service members

RESILIENT

NZCCSS is a resilient organisation with a long-term focus on social justice

We achieve resilience as an organisation, focussing over the long-term on the building of a just and compassionate society, by:

- Being strongly supported by our members to develop and promote policies and approaches which lead to greater social justice and inclusion
- Having the resilience, agility and flexibility to adapt and respond to unexpected issues
- Ensuring we have diversity of funding, an appropriate level of financial reserves and effective governance and management
- Being open to our own and our members’ transformation and change

The Productivity Commission and Quadrant D

After an intense 14-month period the final report of the Productivity Commission's top-down inquiry into social sector services – More Effective Social Services – was released on 15 September to a muted response.

The most prominent coverage in this first week was probably the *Dominion Post* editorial on 18 September (click on image below to read).

The Productivity Commission, established five years ago, has developed a very layered and consciously

designed approach to its process – from issues paper, to draft, to final copy.

Including all of its appendices and associated documents, this latest report – containing 89 Findings and 61 Recommendations – topped 600 pages.

Introducing the report, Commission chair Murray Sherwin wrote that the report's authors had concluded 'that it was not enough to just make the current system work better', and set out the report's two main drivers:

- **System-wide improvement can be achieved and should be pursued** [through system architecture].
- **New Zealand needs better ways to join up services for those with multiple, complex needs** [through lifting the game on commissioning social services].

While the final report repackaged or reconfigured some elements, introduced some new diagrams and added a few surprises not contained in the [draft released in April](#), it was another mixed bag.

A new construct

The key diagram used to set the scene for the final report was an artificial construct used to represent characteristics of clients of the social services system. This was accompanied by an assertion that 'to maximise their effectiveness, social services should be arranged differently to match the needs of people in different quadrants' (page 3, full report).

It is a fair call by the Commission to identify a 'failure to treat deep disadvantage' as the main weakness of the current system. Particularly if that 'deep disadvantage' encompasses evidence of inequality and poverty.

One of the things this construct didn't accommodate was the idea

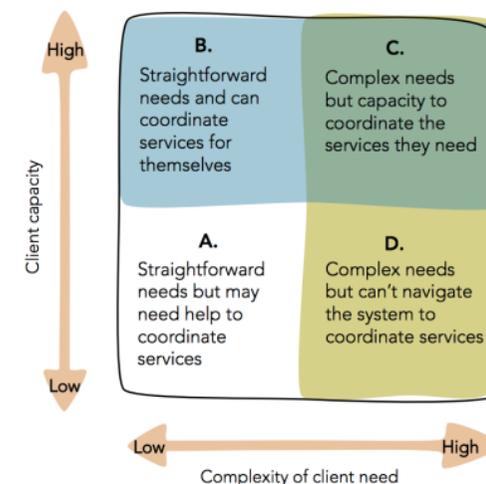
that people might move between 'boxes' at different times in their lives, but rather latched on to the concept that Quadrant D is where all of New Zealand's 'highest cost clients of the social services system' could be located.

The unexplained estimate of 10,000 was then used for the number of clients in that too-hard box, but the report unfortunately didn't drive through to a clear and meaningful focus on how to address opportunities for early intervention to avoid the escalation of problems with this group, let alone put this into a community-based setting. That was a missed opportunity.

Devolved approaches

What it did do, in the biggest change between the draft and final report, was to hammer the idea of 'greater use of client-directed and other devolved approaches', to be complemented with other measures such as national standards, regulation and data collection that might, at the same time, involve 'some centralisation'.

In terms of a 'language shift' mentions of devolution went from 86 in the draft report to more than 260 in the final report.



The definition used – as a counterpoint to top-down control – was that devolution 'transfers substantial decision-making powers and responsibilities to autonomous or semi-autonomous organisations with separate governance'.

Examples given where decision making has been devolved with varying levels of independence were DHBS, Pharmac, Whānau Ora and the Te Hiku Social Accord.

On the surface devolution that encourages flexible adaptation to client needs and local circumstances sounds attractive and is an apt

More use should be made of the abilities, knowledge and capabilities of the many providers and community organisations that know and work with such people

Editorial: Social services for the underclass need major reform

Last updated 05:00, September 18 2015



FAIRFAX NZ

The Once Were Warriors family. How can they get the help they need?

The Productivity Commission and Quadrant D

description really of what NZCCSS members already do, as hinted at by this encouraging statement in the report's section on devolution:

Commissioning at the centre

Having already stated the view that 'there are limits to gains that government can achieve by improving the contracting-out model' and that contracting out is overused, the report next champions a framework of commissioning, and positions effective commissioning as being 'fundamental to well-functioning social services'.

This isn't to say that contracting out is going to disappear. As noted by the Commission – and as we know full well in our sector – considerable effort is being applied to streamline contracting, and the emphasis in this report that there should be a standard duration of three years to social services contracts is welcome.

What this report pushes for is to put development of the capability for contracting out alongside improved capability for commissioning. Whether this would effectively create two playing fields, and what would be done to ensure they remain level playing fields isn't made clear.

A commissioning framework is something that the Commission states requires a wider range of skills and capabilities 'than suggested by

the more commonly used term procurement', and a strong call is made in this report for the Government to 'appoint a lead agency to promote better commissioning of social services', to include guidance and training.

Examples given of organisations that commission social services include MSD, the Ministry of Health, DHBS and Whānau Ora.

All of this is again scene setting for pushing out the case for having an array of service models for delivering social services, and weaving in the point that each system architecture or service model will display different strengths and weaknesses in promoting learning and innovation – to be used as a de facto basis for selecting winners and discarding losers.

The misleading perception that there is a lack of innovation in social services is both persistent and pernicious. It is used constantly to underpin the Commission's thinking and to shape the system design it is promoting.

When push comes to shove it is that innovation in social services is 'often small-scale, local, dependent on a few committed individuals and incremental'.

Clear preferences emerge

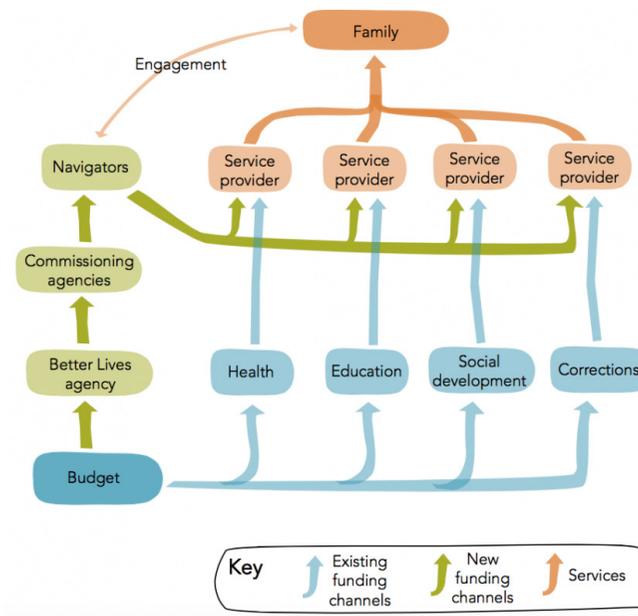
It is only as this report reaches its business end that the clear preferences it is driving towards begin to emerge.

In terms of service models it singles out managed markets, shared goals, voucher models, and client-directed-budget (CDB) models – specifically recommending that this prospective CDB model be trailed for home-based support of older people, respite services and drug and rehabilitation services, allied to creating 'client choice whenever feasible'.

Not surprisingly MSD's Investment Approach (and future welfare liability emphasis) is also endorsed, to the point where the Commission would like to see it coupled to a devolved system and applied 'more widely within and across different government-funded social services areas'.

In what was most probably a piece of its own risk aversion, the Commission is careful not to venture into mentions of social bonds, instead dancing around social insurance while carefully stating it is not recommending the wide extension of social insurance in New Zealand (page 16, Summary report).

In similar fashion to its critique of lack of innovation, the Commission also sets its sights on ways to achieve better integration of services – as an antidote to fragmentation and to



override specialisation in social services, described willy-nilly as a barrier to efficiency and effectiveness.

A magic answer?

Focusing on Quadrant D clients, the magic answer delivered in this report to provide 'an effective, integrated package of services' hinges on the role of a magic Navigator (borrowed from Whānau Ora, and suspiciously akin to a super-powered Social Worker).

This is the point in the Commission's report where it becomes most ambiguous and vague, and yet also its most clinical.

Suddenly a lot of weight is placed on this role of Navigator, with whom a client would most likely have to be 'enrolled'.

And out of nowhere the conception of this role suddenly becomes attached to two sizeable elements of Government agency restructuring: either the setting up of a Better Lives agency or widening the role of DHBS into District Health and Social Boards (DHSBS). [Question: Did anyone ask DHBS about this!?!]

Either of these would then fund local Navigators who would engage with clients and have control over a budget to buy services to best meet their needs.

On the face of it this is a radical proposal, and one that this report has taken some pains to paint as a viable scenario, including a fictitious story that includes these clues as to how a Navigator would operate in an ideal world and that's worth

The Productivity Commission and Quadrant D

capturing a verbatim summary of here (page 362, full report) – with the new elements in bold:

- Denise and her children turn up late one night at Auckland City Mission in a distressed state, she with bruises and a black eye and no access to funds, the younger child clearly ill with a bad chest infection. The Mission provides the three with emergency shelter for the night.
- In the morning, the Mission takes Denise to the **local service centre for the Better Lives agency (or DHSB)** where she meets **Sandra – her system navigator**. It is Sandra's responsibility to work with Denise to establish the services she requires and how these services are best supplied.
- Sandra listens to Denise's story and takes her details. It will be the only time that Denise will have to provide this information as Sandra has the budget and authority to assess Denise's situation and grant her access to the services she needs. Denise gives Sandra permission to view her personal service history from the **national database**. This will help Sandra better understand Denise's circumstances and the services likely to work for her.
- Sandra arranges for Denise and her family to move into temporary housing until permanent state housing becomes available. She enrolls the family with the local primary healthcare provider and makes an appointment for Denise's youngest child to see the doctor. Sandra arranges transport to the appointment.
- Denise decides that to turn her life around she needs to be financially independent. But this will take time. Denise needs to access an unemployment benefit until she gets a job. Sandra sends the electronic paperwork to Work and Income. **Because the application is coming from the Better Lives agency, it is fast tracked** – Denise should have her first payment next week. To tide Denise over, Sandra gives her a payment card with enough funds for groceries for a week or so.
- Sandra and Denise shake hands and Denise leaves the **Wellbeing Office**. Denise gets the feeling that Sandra really understands her situation, and is someone she can trust. Denise is still worried about the future, but she can now see a pathway to a better life for her and her children.

How much will happen?

The Commission is in no doubt that the long-term reform agenda it envisages will require institutional change and leadership from the top.

This latest enabling environment would see a 'small and cohesive' Ministerial Committee for Social Services Reform established along with a supporting Transition Office within the current Government's remaining term, as well as an Advisory Board of system participants to provide the Ministerial Committee with independent expert advice on system design and transition.

The existing Social Sector Board would largely continue on and even accelerate its data-sharing and data-analysis track, with further 'system stewardship' to be exerted through:

- An **enhanced role** for **Superu** (formerly the Families Commission) as the monitor and evaluator of system performance
- A **rolling review** of existing social services programmes against specified criteria

The Commission's indicative timeline would see either a Better Lives agency or DHSB arrangement (or some other model) up and running in 'trial locations' in two to four years time. This would constitute what the Commission calls a 'new deal for the most disadvantaged New Zealanders.'

Simultaneously 'client-centred-service integration initiatives' would also be initiated.

In the Terms of Reference for this Productivity Commission inquiry it is important to note that the referring Ministers – Bill English as Minister of Finance, and Dr Jonathan Coleman as Minister of State Services – advised that 'consideration should be given to the characteristics of the New Zealand provider market, and how it differs from regular commercial markets and how the role of the community impacts on it'.

Between the lines of the final report – which is very clear that its purpose was not to critique the performance of specific agencies or programmes or providers – there is an implicit challenge to NFP providers to demonstrate an openness, capacity and capability to manage within new models.

There is an open invitation to be part of a step up in performance, and an invitation for leaders in our sector to contribute perceptive thinking and an active commitment to achieving change that unleashes our potential.

There is even an acknowledgement that benefits that result from well-functioning social services spill over into society.

As covered in a [previous article](#) here in July, we still have a right to be

wary of the elements of this agenda that are intent on opening the door to more and more privately owned, for-profit organisations to receive an easy ride to full funding and sustainable returns without the hard yards that NFP providers are put through.

All of the Commission's fine references to the systemic underfunding experienced by social services providers immediately start to pale if this 'reform' becomes nothing more than an exercise in cutting back existing services and diverting to a 'more effective' environment characterised by experimental imbalance and wider instability. The Commission is right, social services don't suit a 'one size fits all' approach. On the same basis, buying into the idea that the ideal is to re-size in order to compete alongside each other to attract clients – known as competition in the market – has to be scrutinized more fully than it has been. Lest we forget without the diversity of social services and continuum of options provided by our members, their staff and volunteers, the human costs of disadvantage in New Zealand would be immeasurably higher. And where would that leave the system?

See also/download:

- [NZCCSS's Outcomes Plus: The Added Value of Community Organisations report](#)

JUSTICE IN ACTION

New resources to support action on social justice from the churches

New and creative resources to support action at community level and nationally emerged during September.

Kiwi Families – It's Our Story

Caritas New Zealand led the way with a series of online and hard copy resources featuring some great stories of how communities around the country are taking action for social justice, to overcome poverty and build their wellbeing.

Taking action is about changing hearts, changing structures and changing lives. Four stories shared highlight the way that we can respond to justice issue in our local communities and faith traditions.

The people of Panguru and Motui in the North Hokianga shared their struggles with unemployment and people moving away to the cities in the search for work. Hope is built around the commitment of those who remain to maintain traditions and uphold tikanga. Many whānau feel the draw home and community leaders there talk of their hope and vision for better lives in their community. In South Dunedin local Catholic parishes have combined with Catholic Social Services to offer cooking classes, community dinners, distribute food and run an interest-free loan scheme. In Auckland, De Paul House works with families in housing need to help them

find stability and access to affordable housing. The story of the Living Wage movement highlights how finding work is not always the end of poverty for many working families. The experience of struggling workers who have seen their wages lifted through the commitment of employers such as Wellington City Council to implement a living wage show the way towards justice in employment.

The stories also show the kinds of things that help families to thrive. Moving from low income to having enough to thrive; from poor housing to a good home; taking struggling provinces and making them flourishing regions; bringing stability to transient families; and overcoming isolation to build community. Find out more on the [Caritas website](#).

Justice & Action

The end of September saw the launch of a new highly readable and very useful booklet was launched by Presbyterian Support and the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand. It seeks to answer the

question: **Why should the Church be engaged in action to change outcomes for these vulnerable Kiiws? Why should we be involved in social transformation?**

The focus is on children – the impact of child poverty and family violence and the structural inequalities in our society that lead to this. Stories of transformation are threaded through the booklet, like the Breakfast Club in Randwick School, the Waimana Māori Pastorate 'Messy Church' or the community meal at St Andrews by the sea in Whitianga. In each of those places small initial steps have grown over time to help real change for people and communities.

The booklet helps us to make the link between these community level responses and the bigger picture issues where Government policy changes and legislation is needed. Churches' advocacy through support



of groups such as the [Child Poverty Action Group](#) (and indeed our work at NZCCSS) is the essential part of this wider social transformation towards a more just society. Find out more and download the booklet or order hard copies go to the [PCANZ website Justice & Action page](#). ■



Why we need to change the way we talk about poverty and inequality

Getting inequality and poverty issues ‘much more in the public eye’ in recent times has been a notable success.

Reflecting on that success was part of the topic taken up by journalist and author Max Rashbrooke and Action Station dynamo Marianne Elliott when they spoke at a [Fabian Society](#) event in Wellington on Monday 14 September.

The bigger part of their public talk wasn’t about resting on the laurels of that success, but rather about picking up the challenge of becoming ‘far more effective communicators about these issues’.

Max, who will be well known to readers of *Kete Kupu* for his work on the books [Inequality: A New Zealand Crisis](#) and [The Inequality Debate: an Introduction](#), was a recipient this year of a 2015 Winston Churchill Fellowship to examine the debates in the UK around poverty and inequality.

In particular he was looking at the question of how we talk about poverty and inequality: why the things we say don’t reach all of the public, and what to do about that.

Max: ‘The starting point for a discussion on inequality and poverty is often to begin with an amorphous, vague understanding. What it is... how big it is... what’s causing it... what the solutions are...’

‘The trouble is that just deluging people with facts, when facts only make sense in a context or wider narrative, doesn’t really address the deep mental framing people place around their sets of values and beliefs. Isolated facts bounce off.’

Max also pointed out that too much use of ‘myth busting’ can be just as problematic as dishing up only numbers and statistics – because raising myths or misunderstandings about inequality and poverty may just serve to remind people about prevalent stereotypes and confirm unconscious prejudices (including the one he hears the most: poor people shouldn’t own TVs).

Having suggested people at the talk be prepared to ‘abandon any cherished beliefs (you might hold) about effective communications’, Max proceeded to cover how better understanding the attitudes of the public at large requires taking motivational values into account from the start,

and being respectful of the fact that for a lot of people their political values – left, centre or right – are their moral ground too.

Resisting an obsession with getting the messaging spot on all the time is a challenge

While words and metaphors matter enormously, Max counselled there has to be a good degree of flexibility and adaptation and narrative application in the way we use them, to make them ‘concrete and relatable’. It might be easier for example to reconcile inequality and poverty in New Zealand by talking about imbalances and barriers, hardship and need.

Marianne, a hugely experienced human rights advocate, turned her attention to recent [Action Station campaigns](#) and reinforced Max’s point that ‘it’s incredibly important to understand where people are coming from’.

She spoke about being aware of the constant ‘toggling’ that people do ‘between different stories and views of the world’ in order to make sense of issues, and within the context of



their own life experiences. One aim of campaigning could be seen as the work needed to ‘shift and hold’ that toggling.

Marianne observed that talking about inequality and poverty runs up against especially deeply ingrained and prevalent notions of the economy as a moral enforcer – punishing bad behaviour (e.g. being unemployed) and rewarding good behaviour (e.g. being well paid). And because the metaphors often present the economy as a force of nature, woe betide anyone who is standing in the way of that force.

Marianne closed by saying that a powerful framing for inequality and poverty, when backed with big deliberate interventions, is to get to a point where it can be accepted that the issues ‘are not inevitable... they’re alterable’. ■

continued from front page

relationships can look like, at a level that doesn’t cross a line into treading across each other.

‘These hui have been about understanding common strategies and objectives, with NZCCSS bringing capacities that we need, and together sharing a collective hope for the well-being of whānau, hapū and iwi’.

‘The hui have prompted questions and unlocked doors. I would also say that with someone like Trevor, who is fluent in te ao Māori, can walk in and out of our sector with ease and who knows how to tread carefully in the world of Wellington, we have a platform that offers strong mutual respect.’

‘We need these opportunities to be shaken out of our comfort zones. The feedback has been positive, with our members feeling valued and not patronised.’

For Miri, the relationship is putting her members’ pure focus on being for Māori and by Māori, side by side with people with experience in articulating strategic objectives at a time when ‘means and resources’ are under pressure.

‘In areas where we might feel out of our depth, like policy work or analysis work, an alliance with NZCCSS both creates a certain critical mass and increases our two-way knowledge. The magic is in that mix, and it’s more than just signing an MoU’. ■

Housing of All Kinds

Like houses themselves, housing solutions take many shapes and sizes.

Two completely different stories emerge, for instance, from the experience of Wesley College in the North Island – about to give birth to a ‘new town’ – and the complex housing needs being taken on by the Christchurch Methodist Mission.

Wesley College – A brave new future

As general secretary of the Wesley College Trust Board Chris Johnston has had a long association with the college – at Paerata, north of Pukekohe – and is in the driver’s seat for a property development he’d happily call a dream come true.

A rural setting brings lots of blessings, but paying the bills to keep colleges running is never easy. Hence a plan had been on the drawing board over the last decade to roll a majority of Wesley College’s site and adjoining land into a housing development at a town-sized scale of 4500 sections.

Something that sets the development apart is that it will be carried out by Grafton Downs Limited – a charitable company within the Methodist Church

of New Zealand under the Auckland Housing Accord, which was developed by Auckland Council and the Government to address Auckland’s housing shortage.

Chris readily acknowledges that between the accord and a move away from silo-based council processes the development has had an easier path to market, with years shaved off the timeframe for plan variations.

‘The current Housing Project Office has been a real ally within council. Our goals are their goals,’ says Chris.



Barry Shuker and Chris Johnston (Grafton Downs Ltd directors), Steve Hargreaves (Principal, Wesley College) and Chris Gregory.

Over the next 15 to 20 years a new town will rise up, possibly to be called Franklin, with plans for terraced homes, apartments, stand-alone houses, a primary school, high school, retail developments, green spaces, natural reserves and a retirement village – all interlinked with cycle, walking trails and public transport.

The sale of the sections will help secure the school’s future and fund the rest of the development. At the same time most of the college buildings, barring the historic chapel and a handful of newer buildings, won’t remain, and the college itself will relocate to a yet-to-be-determined nearby site.

Chris: ‘The key beneficiary remains Wesley College which provides for economically disadvantaged students.’

The needs of the most vulnerable

Meanwhile at the [Christchurch Methodist Mission](#) (CMM), the challenges of providing housing that meets the needs of the vulnerable has been a higher and higher priority.

CMM’s involvement in housing for older people dates back to the 1970s, but a side-effect of the Christchurch earthquakes was a sharp realisation

of the heightened needs of renters and homeless young people and families.

Jill Hawkey, CMM executive director: ‘Very little has been done for vulnerable people in rental accommodation, with the results being a whole lot of transience and people doubling up under the one roof or even sleeping in cars in driveways.’

‘We are well placed to respond, and when I met with social workers the nexus of other issues would all come back to the quality of housing.’

‘The situation in Christchurch is calming, but it hasn’t been getting easier,’ says Jill – citing the phenomenon of higher market rentals set by landlords who consider repairs to be the same as ‘doing up’ a house.

Jill believes a simple answer could have been a short-term increase to the Accommodation Supplement in Christchurch to address disparities. Instead she observed that renters were not being listened to, and solutions were skewed more to home owners.

In the context of ongoing social housing reforms CMM has adopted a firm stance that it will not be engaged in any way with the selling off of State housing.

While access to Income Related Rent subsidies help make things stack up financially for community housing providers, Jill maintains

making a real difference would still require major capital injections from the Government.

In accepting that the complexity of housing issues is too large for any one organization, the work of CMM in Christchurch has been about building many positive alliances – importantly, for instance, with the Christchurch City Council and for youth housing the [Youth and Cultural Development Society](#), better known as YCD.

CMM and YCD have one house for homeless youth up and running, with another to follow.

‘Our vision is that no young people are living on the street who don’t want to,’ says Jill.

‘What we bring to this partnership is what it takes to be a tolerant, long-suffering landlord (and) I hope we work together for years to come.’

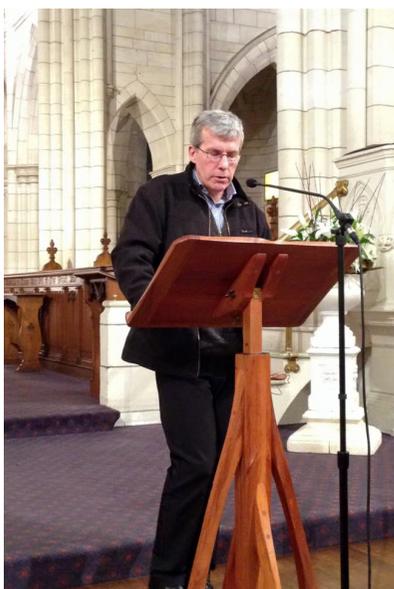
Writing in the winter edition of CMM’s newsletter *Cycles of Hope* Jill stated CMM’s commitment very clearly: ‘CMM is committed to providing warm, secure and affordable housing. Housing homeless young people and families is a demonstration of this commitment. Yes it comes with risks and it will no doubt come with challenges. But in accepting these challenges we are also accepting that homelessness (in all forms) exists in our community and we intend to do something about it.’ ■

Is Housing a Human Right?

PAUL BARBER

Based on address to a forum at St Matthews-in-the-City on 31 August 2015.

There is so much going on, so much to say about housing in this country, it is hard to know where to start. But I want to start at the place where the divine meets the ordinary. We are in a church, a sacred space, but the Christian tradition I come from tells us that if you really want to find God, you may well find that the divine presence is just as likely to be found wrapped in tattered rags lying in an old feeding trough in a run-down stable, or a in leaky garage, or



Paul Barber at St-Matthews-in-the-City.

on some sheets of cardboard piled together for a bed, or crowded onto a mattress with sisters & brothers in a damp, mouldy living room. I think, when we talk about the right to housing, starting among those who Jesus chose to be among and to call to follow him, those on the margins of society – that is a good place to start.

As the late [Sir Paul Reeves](#) put it: ‘The test of any social contract is the plight of the poorest, so we judge social policy not by its cost but by its impact on the poor, needy and marginalised.’

Housing serves many functions: providing shelter, a store of wealth, a place of safety and security providing psychological and physical wellbeing, and a place to build social relationships (from [Sally Keeling, Policy Quarterly Aug 2014](#)). In many faith traditions and cultures the home plays a central role as a place of hospitality and shared ritual.

There are three things I want to say this evening:

- Yes – **housing IS a human right**. So what are we going to do about it?
- Focus on the **most vulnerable end of the housing sector** and what is NOT being done for them.

- Act now – We need a **movement to support the rights of the disenfranchised**. Substantial and meaningful action is possible and urgently needed and once in a generation decisions are being taken now that will shape housing for the next generation for good or ill...

Housing IS a human right

Article 25 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#) states that all people have the right to a standard of living adequate for health and wellbeing – including housing.

Human rights reflect the deep moral consensus of humanity and echo the foundational ethics of the great religions, captured in sayings such as the [Golden Rule](#) – ‘do to others as you would have them do to you’ (Matthew 7:12).

New Zealand has signed up to the Declaration of Human Rights and many of the other agreements that lie under it. That means our Government is accountable to the wider international community for how it enables the fulfillment of people’s right to housing in this country.

Some European countries have made that right part of their law and [research has shown](#) that making the right to housing a legal right makes



it harder to exclude vulnerable people. New Zealand does not have this policy – yet!

National Plan of Action for Human Rights – what does it say about housing?

In July the Human Rights Commission (HRC) released the [National Plan of Action for Human Rights 2015](#) for the next five years. The cool thing about this plan is that it is not several hundred pages of print, with bullet points and recommendations that will gather dust or go out of date. No – it is an agile online app that is tracking the numerous commitments our Government has made to take action. It allows ‘real time’ tracking of progress and can respond to developments in policy.

Taking a look at the app tells us a few things:

- Firstly, it is striking that there is only one specific commitment directly relating to housing: Action 53: Deliver on the Housing NZ Canterbury Investment Plan

But there are significant commitments to take action to reduce child

poverty – and all the experts agree that poor quality housing and high housing costs are the main drivers of child poverty and poor child health in this country:

- Action 32: Reduce the risk of childhood rheumatic fever (damp, mouldy & over-crowded housing is the main contributing factor)
- Action 55: Continue efforts aimed at promoting the rights of children, in particular in the spheres of education, elimination of child poverty, meeting needs of vulnerable and at-risk children.

In summary, the National Plan of Action looks perilously close to a national plan of inaction when it comes to housing but within the actual commitments made there is some basis to call our government to account on housing rights...

But does anyone really care? Who cares about human rights in this country? Let’s talk about changing the flag instead... or the All Blacks World Cup team...

How do we make the right to housing a reality in this country?

Well, the same way other other rights have been won, often through hard struggles over generations.

We need active policy to equalise our society to overcome these barriers of privilege and open them up to the whole population.

Women's equality movement has been, quite literally in many cases, about opening closed doors – of the clubs and organisations and institutions where women were actively excluded & dis-empowered. It took courageous leadership, changing in attitudes and many acts of protest and direct action as well as legislation.

The struggle for Māori land rights is also a story of long years of protest and challenge before meaningful legal changes came through the Treaty settlement process.

Housing equality requires the same kind of opening of closed doors...

Housing is the place where inequality 'hits home'

Housing is at the sharp end of inequality – it is the place where inequality literally 'hits home'. It is a story of exclusion.

- There are 450,000 rental households and the number is rising – welcome to [Generation Rent](#) (as [Shamabel Equab](#) calls it). In numerical terms, [half of our population lives in rental housing](#), although only one third of the households. Those households

are larger, poorer and include more children...

- 290,000 households receive the Accommodation Supplement (AS), only 50,000 of those are NOT in rental housing.

So – more than half of people renting in this country can't afford the rent without government assistance. Most of those people are renting in our deeply unfair private rental market, only about one-fifth are in social housing. The worst houses in that market are the ones where the poorest on our community end up living. While the poor quality of Housing NZ houses in Auckland might be in the news at the moment, research has shown that people renting in the lower end of the private rental market live in the worse quality housing of all. Grotesquely – there may be hundreds of dollars a month being paid to subsidise these slum landlords through AS subsidies.... Our housing market is the graphic demonstration that a poorly regulated private market will fail the poorest in our community. There is no money to be made from the poor unless you cut corners, neglect repairs and maintenance while extracting the highest rent your tenants can bear.

A [landlord's survey undertaken a few years ago](#) found that most landlords are your classic Mum & Dad landlords, owning fewer than 4 properties and treating it as their retirement investment. When asked

what they liked least about being landlords, most replied tenants and property management! You have to ask why they are in this business – it makes as much sense as becoming a nurse when you can't stand the sight of blood and hate shift work!

Social housing is the direct way that government supports vulnerable people to live in dignity but the real size of the social housing sector has fallen dramatically over the past 25 years.

There are 68,000 government owned houses (22 years ago in 1993 it was more like 70,000 but the population has grown by one million since then). The proportion of the total housing market that is social housing has halved to only 5% now. Similar countries like UK or France have three times as much social housing.

[Philippa Howden Chapman and her fellow researchers](#) at the Otago He Kainga Oranga/Housing and Health Research Project point out that introducing renewable tenancies into state-owned Housing NZ rentals since 2011 has created what is now an 'integrated, insecure public/private rental market' including the most vulnerable and lowest income households.

The most vulnerable in that rental market are around [34,000 people \(15,000 of them in Auckland\)](#) who are effectively homeless – which means sleeping rough, in improvised shelter, in unsanitary or over-crowded housing or simply no security

that they can stay where they are. We need at least 12,000 houses now simply to meet this most pressing need! Bizarrely, many of those 34,000 people will not qualify to even get on the social housing register, the official waiting list for people in urgent or high need of social housing.

How many more social housing places are planned? Nobody can say even roughly but most likely it is not nearly enough. The picture is very confused as [HNZ is getting rid of 8,000 houses](#) – it is very hard to see where that number could be replaced, let alone significantly added to. There may be more social housing in Auckland – but again it is not clear who will build those houses and where. Housing NZ may add a few more than they have now in Auckland and there will be an additional 1800 social housing places there over the next 2–3 years – nowhere near enough.

Opportunities are being missed already

- [Hobsonville in Auckland](#) began life more than 10 years ago as a plan to build 3,000 new houses including hundreds of social housing units. Now there will not be a solitary social housing unit – instead a small portion of 'affordable housing' that the poorest will never be able to buy.
- Glenn Innes redevelopment – is replacing 156 social houses with 260 houses but only 78 will be

social housing. Overall the huge [Tamaki Redevelopment](#) aims to replace 2800 HNZ houses with 7500 houses – a great concept except there is no commitment to more social housing at the end (in 15 years' time) – still only 2800 units. Surely there would be room for an additional 1,000 units at least among the 5000 extra houses?

- [Pomare in Lower Hutt](#) – 120 HNZ houses demolished and replace with 150 new houses, but only 20 of those will be Housing NZ and a handful of others are community housing units.

Do you see the pattern? Grand talk of redevelopment, refurbishment of old and poorly aligned houses with new, 'mixed' communities of social and private renters, community housing and private ownership. But the actual net result is fewer social housing units.

The community housing sector (made up of non-government housing organisations) wants to [house 50,000 more people over the next 5 years](#) (which would mean adding about another 15,000 units to the current 5,000) – and is in the process of working on a strategy to get there. But right now there are [less than a thousand additional housing units](#) set to be completed in the next couple of years. And there are major financial obstacles to be overcome before that five year goal can be achieved.

Improve private sector rental quality

Not only do we need thousands more social housing units as soon as possible but we also need to improve the quality of the existing rental stock, especially in the private sector.

Right now [new rules are being written for rental housing](#). The main changes are minimum insulation standards, requirements for smoke alarms and changes to the Tenancy Tribunal to help it work better and to help the government regulators to be more proactive in pursuing non-compliant landlords. The [changes do not go far enough](#) – they do not make it easier and safer for tenants to complain about poor standard housing, they set the bar for insulation too low and 40 years out of date, there are no requirements around heating yet it is the combination of efficient heating and good insulation that makes a warm dry healthy home.

How to take action

We need a movement to support the rights of the disenfranchised. How can you take action?



A VisionWest family with their new house.

We know how to fix this problem – dozens of organisations and communities around this country are already showing us what works. [Housing First](#) is one label we give it – which means getting vulnerable people into stable housing, to create the place and the space to address the other challenges they face in life. And it works, as one person said:

‘I don’t live in fear anymore. I know it’s cheap rent...so I don’t worry about getting evicted’

‘I was like really stressed... now I have more hope. I can concentrate on finishing my studies and look at the future and be a better parent for my child’

So – invest government funding into expanding as fast as possible such programmes. Other countries have done this successfully, but it will take hundreds of millions of dollars of extra funding to build those vital housing assets that are needed.

I would like to see the various groups and organisations involved in representing and working with tenants and their communities working together and networking to strengthen their shared voice and experience. The voice of tenants is hardly heard in the din made by the middle class and the economists and property developers.

- Join the call for better housing standards and a [full warrant of fitness for all rental housing](#). There is no reason not to introduce a

The state of care and the modernising of Child Youth & Family

Children’s Commissioner Dr Russell Wills has shone a light on some of our most vulnerable children in his recent [State of Care report](#). While there is some very good social work and dedicated people working with children in immediate risk, it is once children are in care that things

full wof for housing – it has been successfully trialed throughout the country and does not involve unreasonable costs in relation to the obvious benefits.

- Demand [better tenancy laws](#) that give genuine stability and security to tenants
- Join the call to [build more social housing units](#) and a commitment to a plan to add 30,000 units over the next 5–10 years.
- Get involved in creative, cost effective and environmentally sustainable housing projects that cater for the different needs of varied cultures, faiths and ages.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, ‘Be the change you want to see in the world.’ ■

take a turn for the worst and little is known about how children in care are actually faring. The report indicates children are no better off as a result of state intervention.

The Commissioner asked children what they want from CYF and they answered that they want to be told what they are entitled to, be provided with high quality social workers and caregivers who help them to maintain relationships with their birth family/whānau and listen to what they say and give them a voice in decisions about their care.

The interim report of the Expert Panel reviewing Child Youth and Family [Modernising Child, Youth and Family](#) reflects similar concerns of the children in state care, that they need more nurturing and love.

The Expert Panel report doesn’t gloss over the profile of children and young people most at risk of CYF intervention but it does stop short of critiquing the role played by a far bigger (economic) system that supports a dominant culture of winners and losers. As child advocate, [Associate Professor, Mike O’Brien, Child Poverty Action Group](#) puts it

“There needs to be an urgent focus on improving CYF’s systems to achieve better outcomes for children in State

“She said I was only going to be in care for a week. It’s been three years.”

– Participant in youth voices workshop.

[#stateofcare2015](#)

care. However, the Government must also work to protect children and families so they do not need this type of crisis intervention. Child-centred policies would make a tangible difference for children by ensuring they and their families have adequate income, healthy and affordable housing, and quality education and health services.”

There is no doubt there are flaws in the CYF’s care and protection system that need to be addressed. A system overly focussed on administration, meeting timelines rather than applying professional judgement, coupled with high caseloads are issues long been raised by NZCCSS member agencies and others.

What needs to change?

The Children’s Commissioner recommends setting clear expectations about CYF’s core purpose and outcomes, ensuring CYF is fully child-centred in all its activities and investing more in on-going support for children in all types of care placements. He also recommends addressing capacity and capability issues across the CYF workforce, improving cultural capability across the organisation and the collection and analysis of relevant data to drive improved outcomes for children. ■

Best Place in the World To Die?

An international study has rated New Zealand as the third best place in the world to die. The *Economist* magazine 2015 Quality of Death report ranked 80 countries in five areas of end-of-life care. New Zealand was highest ranked for community engagement but ranked lower for other areas such as healthcare environment, affordability, human resources and quality of care. Only the United Kingdom (1st) and Australia were given better overall ranking.

The overall result of the study shows that wealthy countries with high incomes are the best places to die in, especially in providing basic pain management, but some of the lower income countries like Panama, Uganda and Mongolia are doing really well despite many constraints on their health systems.

Looking ahead to future demand for end-of-life care the report includes an assessment of the relative capacity of countries to respond to future need. This is summarised in a table mapping the level of provision of palliative services in a country against expected future need. Future need is driven by three main factors

– speed of population ageing, the ratio of older people to working age people, and the burden of diseases needing end-of-life care (e.g. cancer, Alzheimer's). The good news for New Zealand in this analysis is that we are among the handful of countries best positioned to be able to meet these future needs.

Most people who die aged older than 65 die in aged care homes

Aged residential care (e.g. rest homes, dementia units and continuing care hospitals) are the places where nearly half of people aged over 65 will die in New Zealand, according to recent Auckland University research. This makes the work around palliative care very important to NZCCSS agencies working with older people in aged care and their families and whānau. In addition to this, many of the NZCCSS social services are involved in supporting older people in the community, including those in the end-stages of terminal illness.

Review of Care for Those with Terminal Illness

The international comparisons in the Quality of Death report provide some background to the Government's Review of Adult Palliative Care Services announced in late August. This review is only one of a number of things happening in palliative care that will be important in shaping support for people with terminal diseases over the next few years.

The review is tasked with looking at current capability and capacity, the projected future need, gaps and barriers in current services, how to develop the workforce and ensure equitable access to services and how to improve quality of services within existing funding settings. A final report from the review is scheduled for **September 2016**.

The review **does not** include in its scope the legal status of voluntary euthanasia, which is the subject of a separate Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry (submissions on this close 1 February 2016), nor does it cover palliative care for children or those with chronic 'life-limiting' diseases who are not in end-of-life care.

The review is also separate to the roll-out of the additional \$76.5 million in palliative care funding over the next four years announced in the 2015 Budget. The funding includes \$13 million per year for 4 years in extra funding direct to Hospice NZ. A further amount of \$3.1 million in 2015-16 and \$7 million per year for the following 3 years was intended to fund 60 extra staff who will also be supporting aged residential care, home based support and primary care services.

The work on developing proposals to use the extra money has been going on over recent months between Hospice NZ, DHBS and the Ministry of Health.

Experts Group

An expert advisory group called the Palliative Care Advisory Panel (PCAP) is also in the process of being established by the Ministry of Health with the aim of providing expert advice on all aspects of the Ministry's palliative care work programme. This group will replace Cancer Control NZ, that was disestablished in August to make way for the Review of palliative care



and the new advisory group. This group will provide advice to on the Review of Palliative care, workforce development, and updating guidance documents for palliative care.

It is pleasing to see the level of serious attention being given to support for older people and their families and whānau. There are new issues and challenges emerging for residential aged care and home support as people live longer in the community and tend to enter higher level care at a more advanced level of need, often at a quite late stage in a terminal illness. The Review and other associated work will need to address these challenges among the many other issues facing end-of-life care in this country. ■

Inspiring stories, discoveries, challenges and frustrations

One-day knowledge exchange for researchers on ageing

Dr Chris Perkins ([Selwyn Centre for Ageing & Spirituality](#))

The Hope Selwyn One Day Knowledge Exchange was held in Auckland on 4 September 2015 and sponsored by the [Hope Foundation](#) and [The Selwyn Foundation](#). This was an opportunity for gerontology researchers, some experienced and some beginners, to present their work and interact with other researchers about their ideas. There was a wide range of topics covered, ranging from the state of the streets in Sri Lanka (i.e. difficult to navigate if you are disabled), through older immigrants' contributions to the New Zealand community (such as teaching knitting), evaluation of the usefulness of a gerontology nurse specialist in General Practice (very useful), and the trauma of losing your driving license. We heard some more about the [LiLACS NZ study](#) (Te Puāwaitanga O Ngā Tapuwāe Kia Ora Tonu, Life and Living in Advanced Age: a Cohort Study in New Zealand) and some reports on the difficulties and frustrations of getting research funded.



Dr Tess Moeke-Maxwell introduced us to [Māori Digital Stories of whānau caregiving at end of life](#). These stories are very worthwhile to support professionals and all those caring for others close to the end of life.

Dr Hilary Lapsley's talk [Re-specialising in Ageing Research, a Retirement Journey](#), was inspiring for those of us who are at that stage. She described how to use your NZ Superannuation as a research grant! At the other end of life, beginning

researchers presented work that had been funded by the [Hope foundation](#).

Each talk lasted only 10 minutes, but the presenters stuck to time and packed in a lot of information. That meant 18 presentations in the day, as well as time for eating and networking. This was a quick but fascinating tour of current research in ageing and some of the challenges of doing this research.

Abstracts from all the presenters are available on the [NZ Association of Gerontology Association website](#). ■

Legislation and submissions

Health of Older People Strategy Comments

The closing date for comments has been extended to **31 October 2015**. (see [our article in the July Kete Kupu](#) for background).

Review of Family Violence Legislation

The [NZCCSS submission](#) on the first stage of the Ministry of Justice [Review of Family Violence Legislation](#) drew on feedback from our member agencies. A key focus of the submission included the need for the review to consider structural influences that support the conditions for family violence (i.e. poverty, overcrowding, substandard housing conditions, inadequate household income, historic colonisation), along with individual actions. NZCCSS also recommended an increase in public funding for primary prevention strategies, as well as additional pathways for help, aimed at both victims and perpetrators of family violence.

State Housing Transfers Law – Too Much Power?

There is concern about the very wide powers being granted to Government Ministers to sell off Housing New

Zealand homes under legislation before Parliament. The [Social Housing \(Transaction Mandate\) Bill](#) is being promoted by the Government as a procedural Bill to help achieve the goal of transferring Housing NZ houses to non-government organisations as part of the Social Housing Reform process.

When the Bill came before Parliament the extent of the very wide powers being given to Ministers became clear. They can essentially enter into [any kind of agreement they like](#) without having to secure the agreement of the Housing NZ Board or (as the Salvation Army points out) follow the social requirements in the law that set up Housing NZ. Opposition parties have been focusing on this in their responses to the Bill and in response to concerns about this, Minister Bennett offers only the [assurance that the 'rule of law' will apply](#).

No guarantee that this Bill will result in more housing for people on low incomes

NZCCSS is submitting comment on the Bill based on the messages we have given previously on the social housing reform process (read [our submission on the Social Housing Reform Bill](#)). The Government is responsible to the most vulnerable in our community to protect their right

LEGISLATION & SUBMISSIONS

to housing and this places a very high duty of care on Ministers and officials when working with people whose lives are already very much under pressure. Our message is that there must be strong commitment from Government to substantially increase the supply of state and community housing and any transfers that may occur need to be part of a clear plan committed to providing thousands more homes that people on the lowest incomes can afford to rent or buy. This Bill does not include such a commitment in its current form.

Rental Law changes are half-hearted

Residential tenancy laws are being revised but will not include a full warrant of fitness (WoF) for housing, which Deputy Prime Minister Bill English rejected as 'extreme'. The initial outlines for proposed changes released in July show only very limited improvements in tenant rights. Legislation is being drafted and was expected to be in Parliament during October. This article puts together some analysis and critique of the proposals to help all those who wish to support the call for stronger tenancy rights and a full WoF for housing.

There are four main elements to the proposed changes (the [full details are on the MBIE website](#)):

- requirement for smoke alarms in all rental properties from July 2016
- requirements for ceiling and underfloor insulation on all rental properties by July 2019
- stronger protections for tenants against retaliatory notice and strengthened enforcement provisions for Government to act against landlords
- faster resolution of tenancy abandonment provisions to allow faster re-letting.

Professor Philippa Howden Chapman and the team of researchers at [Healthy Housing – He Kainga Oranga](#) have produced an excellent analysis of the 2015 Budget and subsequent rental housing quality announcements in a recent *Policy Quarterly* article: '[What effect will the 2015 Budget have on housing?](#)' Other helpful analysis has come from housing advocate Eleanor Chisholm, as well as Wellington Community Law team members and Lyndon Rogers, author of *Paper Walls* and legal researcher for [Anglican Social Justice](#) in Christchurch.

Half-hearted insulation & cold-hearted heating

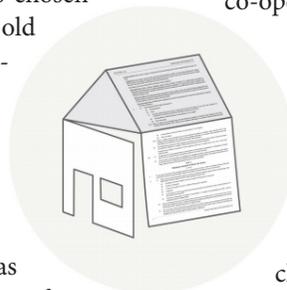
Every winter 1600 extra deaths occur among people aged over 65 in New Zealand that are attributable to housing conditions and most of

those people are likely to be living on low incomes in a rental property. Professor Howden Chapman and her team are strong in their criticism of the minimum standards proposed because they set lower standards for the most vulnerable groups. The proposed standards ignore the evidence of extensive research about the benefits of better housing quality. They argue that no plausible reason is offered by the Minister of Housing Nick Smith as to why he has chosen to use almost 40 year-old housing insulation standards as a minimum, that is just over half of the modern building code minimum requirement (70mm cf 120mm). Even Housing NZ has managed to refurbish most of its properties built before 2000 to the current energy efficiency standards.

At the same time no requirements for heating of houses are included, even though the full health benefits of insulation are only achieved when there is also efficient and cost-effective heating available. The Minister argues that heating is already required under existing law but those regulations date from 1947 and include only the requirement for a 'fireplace or approved form of heating in the lounge' and this is apparently often interpreted as simply meaning there has to be an electric socket!?

Half-hearted Enforcement

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is being given more power to investigate breaches of the Act under the proposed changes. The [Paper Walls report](#) however points out that MBIE already has powers to take over tenancy proceedings from the tenant but has only used it **twice in the last 20 years**. The proposed law changes will also enable MBIE to act without requiring the co-operation of the tenant.



Tenants who make complaints can find themselves the victims of 'retaliatory notice' when a landlord responds by issuing a 90 notice to end the tenancy. The changes around retaliatory notice offer some improvements on current law because tenants

will have 4 weeks instead of 2 weeks to apply to the Tenancy Tribunal for help and the penalty to landlords is increased to \$2,000. The problem still remains that the law still relies on tenants being willing to complain, which they largely are not at present. In the absence of further support and measures to assist them, it is unlikely that many more tenants will be willing to challenge such behaviour.



Positive cost-benefit analysis ignored

Housing researcher and advocate Eleanor Chisholm has [taken a close look at the cost benefit case](#) for a housing WoF prepared by [Sapere research consultants](#) for MBIE that was included in the background papers for the proposed tenancy law changes.

She notes that the total benefits of introducing a rental WoF would be almost \$1 billion. This is effectively the cost society will bear of NOT taking action over the next 20 years, with savings lost in health and safety costs, fire fatalities avoided, and energy savings. This amounts to subsidy of \$7,534 for each of the around 131,000 landlords in NZ from our health and ACC system. In effect the worst landlords are getting a free ride on the taxpayer while good landlords receive no reward for providing good quality housing.

In contrast, the costs of repairs to WoF standard are estimated \$1,811 per dwelling (\$653 million), although this excludes a fixed form of heating that would add to the cost.

LEGISLATION & SUBMISSIONS

But overall, there is a very positive cost-benefit ratio for a full WoF.

The actual proposed changes do not go even halfway to realising these benefits. The 1978 insulation standard is lower (just over half) than the current standard that was used for the research used to estimate the benefits of a WoF.

Similarly, a weak enforcement approach is being taken that relies on 'market forces'. Tenants are told what the state of the house is and they can take the landlord to the Tenancy

Tribunal if the standard is not met. It is expected that only two-thirds of landlords would comply (and probably the more responsible ones?) compared to an approach along the lines of vehicle WoF that would attain 90% compliance.

Thus it is unlikely that most of the health benefits will be achieved by the proposed changes. Even Treasury was moved to comment that the proposed changes fail to meet quality assurance criteria.

Things We Could Do Right Now

Community Law centres around the country are familiar with the issues around existing tenancy law and [Community Law Wellington & Hutt shared good blog post](#) on existing legal rights that need to be better enforced. This is also the theme of the [Paper Walls report](#) as well. Both these resources emphasise the need for:

- **active enforcement of the law** and current standards by regulatory authorities. This would

require them to have the staffing and direction from leadership and management to do this.

- **Rights of tenants to be more actively supported** through education to know their right to stop landlords re-letting sub-standard housing.
- **Publishing of Tenancy Tribunal proceedings** so that lawyers and advocates can see decisions and precedents and use them to support tenants. ■

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services SERVICES FOR OLDER PEOPLE CONFERENCE

Thursday 12th - Friday 13th May 2016

Rendezvous Hotel, Auckland

www.nzccss.org.nz

Valuing people living well



New Zealand Council Of
Christian Social Services

Planning is in full swing for our 2016 conference. We have some keynote speakers confirmed and the workshop programme is taking shape. Keep an eye out for updates on conference preparation on our new [Valuing People Living Well Conference page](#).

Business partnerships invitation

We have created a whole range of innovative ways for organisations and businesses to showcase their work and meet our people through our conference as sponsors and exhibitors. Check out the [Conference Business Partnership package](#) on the conference webpage. ■

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

Acknowledgements: In addition to
its member subscriptions, NZCCSS
extends its thanks to: JR McKenzie
Trust, Working Together More
Fund, The Tindall Foundation 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