

DATA IS KING

Trevor McGlinchey

The need for government funded social services providers to have effective data collection methods has never been stronger. Government contracted organisations must demonstrate they are recruiting the 'right' clients, delivering the 'right' services and achieving the 'desired outcomes' or risk losing their funding to organisations with better client data collection and outcome reporting systems.

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The Government's "social investment model" is gaining pace. Late last year Government hosted the second in a series of hui at parliament. This hui, "Hui Tatauranga, Unleashing the power of data for good" brought together government agencies including The Treasury and Statistics New Zealand, iwi, NGOs, and data systems developers to discuss how data can be used to identify those who are most in need of support. Those for whom successful early intervention could result in significant future savings for government. The papers and presentations from this meeting can be found [on the Statistics NZ website](#).

More recently Treasury has released the *Characteristics of Children at Risk*, where children's likelihood of "poor future outcomes" has been categorised against four indicators, indicators which are directly linked to the Government's Better Public Service Targets. These are:

- **Indicator 1** – Having a finding of abuse or neglect
- **Indicator 2** – Being mostly supported by benefits since birth
- **Indicator 3** – Having a parent with a prison or community sentence
- **Indicator 4** – Having a mother with no formal qualifications

The data used to identify the level of risks (and potential government costs) associated with a child who has one or multiple risk indicators is detailed through a series of infographics available [on the Treasury website](#). There is also an interactive website page where the data is regionalised, and broken down into actual numbers and proportions of children at risk. In this way risk factors, regions and numbers of children including demographic information such as boy, girl, Māori, Pasifika, other can be explored. This information will

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Register now – Conference 2016

Registrations are now open for our 2016 conference and you are invited to join us for two inspiring and thought-provoking days incorporating a great mix of break-out sessions, keynote speakers, panels and workshops.

Our conferences are open to everyone working in the sector. They are friendly and collegial events, a place to meet and get to know better others who share your dedication to responding to the issues that face older people and those who work with them.

'Valuing People, Living Well'

The conference theme speaks right into the heart of all that motivates us as we work in this area. It captures our aim to be constantly seeking to find better ways to support older people to live well in our communities and

to truly value the essential dignity and value of every person.



Keynote Speakers

Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, Prime Minister's Science Advisor, is one of New Zealand's most

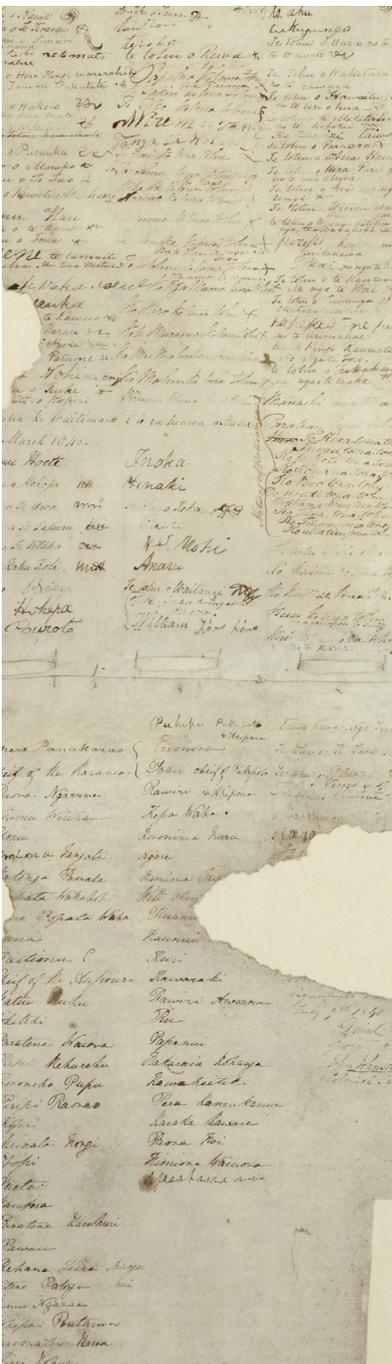
distinguished scientists and researchers. He is a member of the Royal Society of London, a winner of the Rutherford Medal New Zealand's premiere award for scientific achievement and was named New Zealander of the Year in 2004 and appointed to the Order of New Zealand in 2015.

His extraordinary list of achievements in his expert fields of epigenetics and evolutionary biology have been built on what he describes as curiosity, "the starting point for

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Thursday 12th - Friday 13th May 2016
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Re-imagining how we live together Constitutional transformation

NZCCSS includes a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi within its mission statement alongside the vision of justice and compassion for the poor and vulnerable in society. Understanding what Te Tiriti means for our work for justice 176 years after it was signed is an ongoing task. A recent and valuable addition to understanding what Te Tiriti means for Māori and its implications for how we live together in this land, for how this country is governed has come from Matike Mai Aotearoa, the [Independent Iwi Working Group on Constitutional Transformation](#).

[He Whakaaro Here Whakaumu Mo Aotearoa](#), the Working Group report, is a vitally important and timely document that approaches the meeting of Māori and Pakeha worldviews with a fresh and innovative view. Included in the terms of reference is the idea of transformation, which is understood as an ideal and revolutionary aim instead of change or reform. This gives us a context with which to reimagine the cultural and social landscape of our country. Te

Tiriti is about relationship and so is a constitution.

Forming a possible picture of what constitutionalism could look like, and drawing influence from He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Niu Tireni of 1835 ([The Declaration of Independence 1835](#)) and Te Tiriti o Waitangi of 1840, the report sets forth some clear suggestions and possible working models.

While recent Treaty claims settlements have been a welcome acknowledgement and offer some form of amends, much injustice and inequality remains.

[Matiki Mai Aotearoa](#) is about achieving constitutional transformation to bring together both Māori and Pakeha worldviews and will be seen as a significant work for a long time to come.

The Terms of Reference for the Working Group... did not ask the Working Group to consider such questions as “How might the Treaty fit within the current Westminster constitutional system” but rather required it to seek advice on a different type of constitutionalism that is based upon He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti. For

that reason this Report uses the term “constitutional transformation” rather than “constitutional change.”

Extensive consultation across the country was undertaken between 2012–2015 and included 252 hui, written submissions, organised focus groups and one-to-one interviews. This process got to the heart of some complex issues and the outcome is a rich document of viewpoints translated by the Working Group into ‘*constitutional possibilities*’ to incorporate Rangatiratanga and Kāwanatanga.

The Working Group sets out 6 *indicative models* for further consultation and states:

The first issue addressed in all of those discussions, and in this Report, was simply to state what should be obvious but has been denied and distorted for too long – that Māori, like all peoples, always assumed and gave effect to the right of self determination. Within the territorial jurisdiction and sometimes the changing fortunes of Iwi and Hapū the people were self-governing.

The kaupapa underlying the suggested indicative models is that Te Tiriti envisaged the continuing exercise

of rangatiratanga while granting a place for kāwanatanga. It provided for what the Waitangi Tribunal recently described as “different spheres of influence” which allowed for both the independent exercise of rangatiratanga and kāwanatanga and the expectation that there would also be an interdependent sphere where they might make joint decisions.

We call those spheres of influence the “rangatiratanga sphere”, where Māori make decisions for Māori and the “kāwanatanga sphere” where the Crown will make decisions for its people. The sphere where they will work together as equals we call the “relational sphere” because it is where the Tiriti relationship will operate. It is the sphere where a conciliatory and consensual democracy would be most needed.

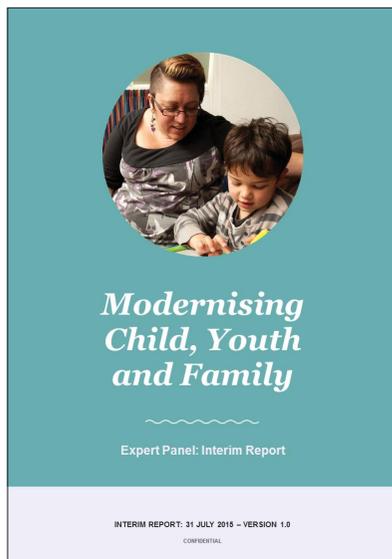
By its very nature the idea of constitutional transformation seeks a profound change in the existing political order. Any proposal of that kind therefore needs to address a number of questions about the grounds for change as well as the ways in which it might be implemented and be of benefit to everyone involved. ■

The modernisation of Child, Youth and Family

Significant changes to social services for children and young people are likely to be announced soon. The *Modernisation of Child, Youth and Family* interim report was released in September 2015 and the full final report was provided to the Minister of Social Development just before Christmas. We can expect that Cabinet is considering proposals to update the Child Youth and Family (CYF) Act 1989 and other changes to affecting children and young people.

Within this is an important and exciting opportunity to transform the way we support the children who are in state care. In particular, there is a long overdue opportunity for iwi/Māori to be given a voice regarding the care and wellbeing of their tamariki mokopuna.

In April last year, the Minister for Social Development established the Modernising Child, Youth and Family Expert Panel to help oversee this review process, with an eye towards developing a more child-centric approach. While the interim report has highlighted some serious



weak points in the delivery of CYF services, it also noted that there was a committed frontline workforce and pockets of good practice.

When it comes to the modernisation of CYF practises, there will no doubt be many suggestions that will greatly benefit New Zealand children in state care. Where this process may fall short is when it comes to meeting the needs of Māori children. Any

attempt to modernise operations and provide truly meaningful solutions going forward should include iwi and Māori social service workers and leaders. They have a wealth of insight and cultural experience and capabilities, and are in the best place to understand what Māori children need in order to thrive and succeed.

It is well documented that Māori children are over-represented in CYF care, currently making up 57% of all children CYF see by the age of five. While this is one of the factors considered in the Modernisation Report, and of course any effort to address this is great news, the welfare of Māori – and the future state care practises regards Māori children – would be best addressed with Māori-led ideas and solutions.

NZCCSS member agencies and other community social services understand better than most that something needs to be done to improve the experience of Māori children and young people in state care. While the modernisation of CYF is a necessary and welcomed action,

there is a danger of assuming that the needs of all children are identical.

It could be said that Māori leaders and social work professionals are calling for not merely reform but a transformation of social services for Māori. This is an important point that is often not acknowledged: that iwi/Māori have solutions and capabilities of their own that perhaps the state alone cannot always provide. What should be amplified for maximum reach is that there is willingness, knowledge and experience among Māori communities, and the possibility of available infrastructure, to care for Māori children within their iwi and communities. Much more than what a social worker can provide, it is their iwi who are able to explore their whakapapa and find

whānau who are able and willing to care for them.

This sense of belonging and whānauatanga is central to Māori culture, and is essential for the transformation of these children's lives. While the government is focusing more on all children in state care, the modernisation process is also an opportunity to acknowledge, accept and support Māori in taking responsibility for the future of their tamariki mokupuna.

We need to move away from the assumption that Māori children in state care need only be made to be safe. While this is, or course, important in the immediate situation, long term this attitude and approach fails to deliver a sense of belonging. What better home for Māori children in state care than with their extended family and iwi? As much as we may try, state care that doesn't include cultural relevance and experience lacks a transformative element. It is here that they can be introduced to who they are. ■



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inform future thinking about what services are needed where and for whom. You should check this out on the [social investment insights website](#).

This data is developed through analysis of multiple data sets held by government. Data such as benefit access, educational achievement, arrest and sentencing records, and Child Youth and Family information. While this is big data – anonymised and protected prior to being released to the public – the implications for the protection of peoples' private information has never been greater. The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) has been, along with others, calling for a review of New Zealand's Privacy Laws. See the "NZCCSS Says No to AISA" article in the [March 2015 edition of Kete Kupu](#). It's good to see this looks like this has been heard with Bill English stating "... Government will have a conversation with the New Zealand public about the acceptable use of your sensitive information" in his [recent address](#) to the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand.

The use of data in this way is of course somewhat problematic. Even The Treasury places caveats on its use noting, "Although these four indicators are associated with poor future outcomes, they may not cause the

poor outcomes directly. Instead they may be linked to other things that lead to poor outcomes". NZCCSS suggests that another set of indicators could just as easily be used, a set of indicators which would more likely address the core causes of poor future outcomes than the current set of indicators. These could include:

- Having a low income – whether on a benefit or in employment
- Living in a cold, damp mouldy and/or overcrowded home
- Going to a low-decile school which does not have sufficient resources to meet your educational needs
- Having parents with unmet health needs such as mental health and addiction issues

These kinds of indicators would create the need for set of outcomes which meant all New Zealanders were treated as valuable. Where income whether from employment or benefits was sufficient for people to feel included in the mainstream of society; where there were sufficient, affordable, high quality homes; where low decile schools were highly funded and supported to create a real difference in their students' learning; and, where the health needs of all New Zealanders were addressed. ■

This article was initially released as a blog article for ComVoices.

Moving targets

Salvation Army's annual State of the Nation report is out and aptly named. *Moving Targets* covers a wide array of information. Targeting in on the state of social policy in key areas, the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit also highlights the 'movable feast' of governmental reporting.

The report has this to say about the name:

On the one hand, it is an allusion to the way in which some government agencies appear to be using targets and the numbers behind them in a less than straightforward and reliable manner. This practice has many subtle and ingenious approaches – ranging from changing the definitions behind indicators so results appear better, to inventing new numbers like pseudo-service level indicators that are difficult to verify and have no point of reference, to simply changing reporting formats in the name of improving accountability without any improvement in the reliability of the information provided.

Plateauing since 2010, the number of children living in poverty is 222,000. That the economy has grown by over 13% in that time is another reminder that much more needs to be done. Substantiated child abuse and

neglect cases have dropped though reported cases have increased.

Despite making up 16% of the population, Māori make up 56% of those in prison. The number of inmates across the country hit an all time high over 2014/15, with the total reaching an average of 8,732. While there was a drop in the rates of reoffending over the 4 years previously, recidivism is starting to rise again.

The number of people unemployed has stayed largely the same for the last five years, and the amount of jobs created last year fell to 20,000. There are 1 million New Zealanders over 18 receiving government income assistance, and of that 1 million 700,000 are receiving superannuation or veterans pension.

Falling from an average of 10.2 to 9.3 litres per person since 2010, the consumption of alcohol has dropped. Road deaths attributable to alcohol have stayed more or less the same, currently at or around 13%.



Interestingly, the number of convictions for drug offences has dropped by 40% since 2010.

In housing, rents continue to rise faster than wages and salaries and house prices continue to soar. Every indicator in housing is at an all time high, with years of average wage/salary required to purchase a median value house now at 8 nationally and 12.9 in Auckland.

The overall conclusion to draw from the report is that while there are some hopeful signs of progress, overall not enough is changing fast enough to make a meaningful difference to reduce poverty, improve housing or reduce social hazards.

Read the full report on the [Salvation Army website](#). ■

Community support for food bank

Sue Barlow, Lower Hutt Foodbank

One of the strategic imperatives for 2015–18 of NZCCSS is “to bring the lived experience of poor and vulnerable people to the attention of our wider communities.” In some cases this occurs when community organizations take responsibility in very specific ways for helping people who are struggling to make ends meet and use their own resources to assist those whose lives are marginalized.

One organization which supports people who are poor and vulnerable is the Lower Hutt Food Bank. It was opened in 1986 to provide an easily identifiable centre where people could find relief. Initially it was run by a local Methodist church which provided a room and volunteers. After that the Hutt City Council provided premises, power, rubbish collection and other services. Now the food bank is independent, relying on grants, donations and the good will of the community.

During December 2015 there were several community institutions which supported the Lower Hutt Food Bank, most notably Hutt City Libraries and Pak n Save, Petone.

The public libraries agreed to waive fines for overdue items during the month of December in return

for donations of groceries. The rate was one tin per \$5 fine. In fact, some borrowers contributed more than was needed just to cancel their fines and library trolleys soon piled up. Manager, Sandra Mann and her staff confirmed that the libraries waived over \$23,000 in fines and as a result several heavy carloads of groceries were driven across the city to Dudley St in the lead up to Christmas and New Year.

Another project to support the food bank was initiated by Pak n Save, Petone. Most Hutt supermarkets have drop boxes where customers can leave donations of groceries. These boxes are regularly cleared by volunteers who ferry the contents to the Dudley St depot for distribution. However, Pak n Save, Petone introduced a new feature by launching a “special” for three months until the end of December 2015 so that groceries left in the drop box were scanned and Pak n Save generously matched their total value, dollar for dollar. As a result, manager



Ben O'Sullivan, manager PAK'nSAVE, Petone and Juliet Clare (food bank chair).

Ben O'Sullivan presented the food bank with extra credit of over \$7,000.

Supported by these two initiatives, people who are sick, injured, unemployed, violently abused or suffering from other kinds of shock received some extra food parcels last Christmas. These two programmes deserve the recognition and thanks from the Hutt community for their creative response towards helping people who might otherwise have had less than most during the festive season. ■

NZCCSS accredited Living Wage employer

We are thrilled to share the shiny new logo that confirms NZCCSS as an accredited Living Wage Employer. The NZCCSS Council meeting of 25 February 2016 received this news with delight and on 29th February NZCCSS Policy Advisor Paul Barber joined with others from the Wellington Living Wage movement to celebrate the announcement of the [2016 Living Wage rate](#), hosted by Pivotal Thames, another new Living Wage Employer.



The number of accredited employers continues to grow, with almost 50 listed on the [Living Wage New Zealand website](#) and there are many more employers committed to the concept and taking steps in towards a living wage, even if they

are not in the position to achieve accreditation just yet.

Lifting wages for low income working people is one of the many parts of the response to inequality and poverty in this country. Hundreds of workers around the country are already benefiting from the decisions of their employers to implement a living wage. It is one very direct step that every organisation, business, local or central government agency can take to make a difference in their communities. While many organisations within social services are heavily reliant on government funding that means paying the living wage rate is not currently possible, support for the principle is growing and the focus of the living wage campaign remains those in business

and local and central government who have control over funding decisions, including wages, to take action now. ■



SERVICE FOR OLDER PEOPLE CONFERENCE

innovation”. He talks of ‘blue skies’ research that appeared to be of no obvious value yet it has led in time to developing the first effective therapy for brain damage at birth.

In his role as Chief Science Advisor, he sees that science has a central role in our future and can help transform New Zealand socially, environmentally and economically. But scientific change also brings uncertainty and progress can come into conflict with the beliefs and cultures of our society. His role is to promote the public understanding of science, and we look forward to him sharing his thoughts on how science and innovation link to supporting older people to live well.

Lin Hatfield Dodds, the National Director of Uniting Care Australia, is an inspiring and insightful advocate for social justice. She is an expert on social policy and community services and is currently part of the Australian national Aged Care Sector Committee, providing reform advice to the Australian Government.

Lin was named Australian of the Year in 2008 and her background includes working in counselling in government and community settings, including in drug rehabilitation and with young people



at risk, as well as extensive experience as a public policy advisor on health and community services within federal and state governments.

Her keynote address “Disruptors, dollars, and dignity: keeping people at the centre of our service systems” will look at some of the central challenges facing social services and older people and how we are can respond.



Dr. Judith Davey is Senior Associate of the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies at Victoria University and former Director of the New Zealand Institute for Research on Ageing (NZiRA). She is one of New Zealand’s leading experts on social policy and her personal focus for research is the ageing of the population and its policy implications. She has researched income, transport, care and housing issues for older people, and intergenerational issues.

Her Keynote address “Ageing and Change: Looking to the future in Aotearoa New Zealand” will aim to help us to take a good look over the horizon as our population ages and social dynamics continue to change.

Being now in “the stage of life formerly known as retirement”, Judith is a strong advocate of Positive Ageing:

What used to be called retirement should be a time of opportunity – to create a portfolio of activities, which may include unpaid and paid work, caring, travel, leisure and hobbies, not forgetting quiet reflection and reminiscence.

Mark Powell, former CEO of the Warehouse Group, is a prominent business leader who has just taken up a new role as Massey University Business School’s CEO in residence. After 13 years in various roles with The Warehouse Group, including the last 4 years as CEO, he is looking to



Mark Powell (right), with Massey University Business School head Ted Zorn.

become a *ley liaison* person between the academic world and the business community. In addition to his work with the university, he has strong involvement in the faith-based NGO sector and is a strong believer in education, with plans to embark on his third master’s degree study programme. He is well-placed to offer insights into leadership and ethics in business.

Whatever challenge you are facing, there have been countless others who have dealt with that same challenge before. You don’t have to start from scratch – you just need to know where to get the information you need and

critically assess how it applies to your own organisation and situation.



Garry Smith is CEO of the Selwyn Foundation, with more than 20 years’ experience in the health sector. Prior to joining Selwyn in 2012, he was CEO of the country’s largest health board, Auckland District Health Board, for nine years. As well as being a trained accountant, he has experience in management and banking. Garry is passionate about providing ethical and values-based leadership ensuring integrity, warmth and respect for people at all times.

The Selwyn Foundation is a charitable Christian organisation dedicated to serving older people and their families, offering everything from funding of charities and age-related research through to independent living and residential care for the elderly. We look forward to learning more from him about the exciting role that new technology developments are having in community care.

Concurrent workshop sessions

The three streams of concurrent workshop sessions over the two days of the conference offer the chance for conference participants to pursue areas of specific interest and learning. The workshops are grouped under



three broad categories of strategy and leadership, home and community services and aged residential care.

Conference Social Events

The full conference registration includes Thursday evening’s pre-dinner drinks and speeding meeting with conference sponsors and exhibitors, followed by the conference dinner. We are lining up some good entertainment to compliment some fine food, so be sure to plan in this time and locals can also purchase extra tickets for colleagues and friends.

Conference Venue

The venue is right in the heart of Central Auckland, making it easy to access with public transport, ample parking on site and efficient links to Auckland Airport for those flying in from further afield. The Rendezvous Hotel is an outstanding venue that takes you close to the pulse of Auckland City’s cultural and civic life and a great place to extend your stay to enjoy the sites and events. ■

Registration is open now and costs \$550 (plus GST) for the full conference, including all sessions, daytime catering, pre dinner speed meeting and conference dinner, and site meetings. To register see the [conference website](#). We look forward to seeing you there.

Cost savings hit the vulnerable

In an example of the negative effects of putting costs before services, the Southern DHB Meals on Wheels service has hit some serious snags. Within the first few weeks since changing the way the meals are prepared, its clients are seeking other services, with the *Otago Daily Times* reporting that a quarter of recipients have cancelled in the month since the new service began.

In an effort to save costs (about \$7 million over the next 15 years) the service from catering company Compass Health now trucks down frozen meals from Auckland and Hamilton to be reheated and delivered to both the Meals on Wheels clients and Southland Hospital patients. The result has been reports of inedible meals or, in the least, inconsistencies in the quality of food.

While it seems that many of those cancelling the DHB service are turning to other providers such as the St Barnabas Trust, who provide an alternative meal delivery service, there is concern that some people may not be eating properly or cannot afford the more expensive alternatives meals. While it is wonderful that there are others options to turn to – what if there hadn't been an alternative?

The older people in our communities are particularly vulnerable to

illness and having access to healthy and nutritious meals is an essential factor in their daily lives. The Meals on Wheels service helps people to live more independently in the community and lessens the chances of them needing higher level care or ending up in hospital.

Has the DHB been too short-sighted in only looking at the cost of this service without considering the knock-on consequences for our communities? Is this another example of vulnerable older people on modest incomes ending up bearing the cost as DHBs trying to balance their budgets? Will this simply backfire on the DHB as other areas of health (acute hospital wards, aged residential care, GPs and primary care) have to respond to those people becoming unwell? ■



Robots finding a place in aged care

Continuing their use of pioneering technology in aged care, the Selwyn Foundation has invested in nine more PARO robotic seals. The therapeutic seals respond to touch and other environmental stimuli by making soothing noises and minor movements like opening their eyes or moving their tail.

Healthbots such as these have been shown to assist older people and encourage social engagement and even to lower blood pressure. A new study has been completed by researchers at Auckland University, this time focusing on patients with advanced dementia. The report is due to be released in August 2016.

CEO of the foundation, Garry Smith commented in a press release: "Whilst it's unlikely that robots will ever replace personal care or even pet animals in residential care facilities,

there is a place for such assistive technology in aged care – for example, as an aid to communication, health monitoring and in ensuring the ongoing wellbeing of older people living alone." ■

Valuing Lives, Living Well research project

December 2015 saw the start of a new research project for NZCCSS. This new study builds on the work of the earlier NZCCSS study "Outcomes Plus" but with a specific focus on work with older people.

A large proportion of the work of social service agencies within the NZCCSS networks is focussed on supporting older people. These agencies work across the continuum of care for older people from day programmes and home based support through to residential and palliative care. These Christian social service agencies have a history of valuing the lives of those they support and through this contribute to their older clients living full lives, to their living well.

There is always a need to establish clarity around what services work best in social services. With a growing population of older people living longer than ever before – with more of them requiring some kind of assistance – the need to highlight good practice is taking on a new urgency.

This study, *Valuing Lives, Living Well* uses a grounded research

approach to understand the "organisational specific capital" of NZCCSS member agencies in the context of their work of supporting older people.

The research will look at cross section of the services of ten providers through the eyes of management, staff and clients. Recognising the need to involve all those who are part of each of the participating organisations circles, the research team will visit with urban and rural providers in both the North and South Islands to collect information across a wide range of services.

The end result of this data gathering and analysis will seek to improve the effectiveness of social services for older people, as well as providing insights for social services, making it easier to share good practice as well as influence emerging health and social policy. The project is due to be completed in time for presentation at the Valuing People, Living Well conference in May 2016.

Contact for more information is researcher [Brent Neilson](#). ■

Legislation and submissions

Parliament urged to do more to lift rental housing standards

This is an opportunity to save lives and more needs to be done to lift rental housing standards than what is proposed in the Residential Tenancies Amendment Bill. This was the main message the NZCCSS Executive Officer Trevor McGlinchey and Policy Advisor Paul Barber gave when they appeared before Parliament's Social Services Select Committee on February 17th in support of NZCCSS submission on the proposed legislation. This is a message shared by hundreds of others who submitted on the Bill, including the Children's Commissioner, Dr Russell Wills.

A large part of the Christian message is compassion and care for the poor and vulnerable of our communities and this bill in its current form, fails to fully embrace the opportunity to raise the standard of housing for those without a voice. While some of the proposed changes are a step in the right direction, there are some important factors missed.

The Bill does not set standards for fixed forms of heating, adequate ventilation and lack of mould, the enforcement model is weak and a confusing two-level insulation standard that effectively leaves loopholes for non-compliance. NZCCSS and our

members know that more needs to be done, and this bill is an opportunity to really make a difference.

For so many in poverty and hardship, there is a feeling of disenfranchisement and fear. Tenants must make a complaint to their landlords or the Tenancy Tribunal if they feel their houses are unsafe or in need of insulation. This is something that the Bill will not significantly change, yet we know that many tenants, especially those who are vulnerable through low income, disability, poor physical or mental health or for whom English is a second language, feel too afraid to make such complaints, in case they were to lose their house. The proposed changes to do not go far enough to address this and our submission called for more proactive enforcement by Government agency of existing law, a review of the work of the Tenancy Tribunal, as well as better resourcing of tenant advocacy and support groups.

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

Pokie gambling: Another review of the rules planned?

Minister Hon Peter Dunne has [told a recent international gambling conference](#) in Auckland that he is working on an assessment of the "regulatory environment" for Class 4 (pokie

machine) gambling. This follows on from his moves last year to water down some of the rules on returning money to communities that were only brought in to regulations barely a year earlier.

The central issue last year was a proposed change to the minimum rate of return, which was raised in September 2014 in an effort to ensure more grants were being given to the communities that most needed them. New stipulations were included that required pokie trusts to distribute more of the proceeds of gambling back to the communities where they were lost.

While it would seem logical to funnel as much money as possible back to the communities it came from, this is sadly not always the case. There is a tendency for grants to go to middle-class communities. Like the trickle up of our neoliberal economic structures, so it seems our community gambling grants tend to 'trickle up' from poorer communities to the more comfortable.

In November NZCCSS provided comments on the proposed changes, in an effort to retain the positive changes that had only been introduced a year earlier. The time-frame for public consultation was short and it does not appear that much effort was put into informing the public about the proposed changes. All submissions have been published on the

[Department of Internal Affairs website](#), of the 30 responses, almost all were from pokie gambling societies

What needs to be remembered in the discussion about rules and regulations is the sometimes devastating cost to the wider community of pokie machine gambling. While the gambling industry may prefer to paint a simplistic picture of this, it is important to acknowledge the various layers involved. The changes that were made to the Gambling Act last year were a welcome step in the right direction, so it is disappointing to see attempts to wound back some of this progress. We need to advance this even further if we are to see some serious and meaningful improvement for the most disadvantaged communities.

As we are seeing now in Auckland with the trialling of drug courts, perhaps courts for gambling addicts – and problem gamblers – are a possible and more compassionate way forward. In a recent study by AUT's Gambling and Addictions Research Centre ([reported by Radio NZ](#)) found that as many as a third of prisoners admitted to committing gambling-related crimes.

Read the full NZCCSS comments on the proposed changes to the minimum rate of return to communities from pokie machine societies under [Submissions on our website](#). ■

Kete Kupu Word Basket

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