

Food for Thought: Conversations with City Missioners

The security of food supply in Aotearoa New Zealand emerged as a pressing focus as the country went into COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. The community food distribution sector faced enormous pressure from a daunting increase in demand. Over a year later we're checking in with the country's three City Missions to hear what life is like now and the learnings that are influencing their future direction.

Auckland City Mission

Helen Robinson has been in the role of Auckland City Missioner since only 2 April. The learning curve for such an influential position was perhaps less steep than it might have been had she not previously been the Mission's General Manager, a role she held for four years. Before that she held leadership roles in the Mission's homelessness and food security teams – all valuable experience in preparing her for the reality that, in her new day job, nothing is simple.

Certainly, working to transform the persistent, gritty systemic issues of homelessness, food insecurity, addiction and affordable health-care is anything but simple. That's before you throw in a pandemic.

For the Mission, things got very focused very quickly last year. Helen says that prior to COVID-19 lockdown and response, the Mission was distributing 400–500 food parcels per week.

"At level 4, that number rose to



Helen Robinson

between 1300 and 1500 per week. Back down in level 1, that number has settled at 900–1000 parcels per week."

The Mission expects to have distributed 50,000 food parcels by financial year's end. "And we're just one organisation," says Helen. "The particular issue we face here in Auckland is one of scale – how do we respond to the depth and extent of the issue?" It's a question that shapes a dual focus of the Mission. "Ultimately, we want to end the need

for food parcels. This country produces enough food to feed all its people. So production is not the problem; the problem is around who gets what."

And that's due to the shortcomings of systems and infrastructure.

"In the meantime, people are hungry now," says Helen. To balance the tension between the now and not yet, the Mission has one primary focus to ensure that it has the best quality food – and enough of it – while also working towards changing the system that creates the inequality.

"We need a national conversation in Aotearoa New Zealand around how we plan to feed ourselves well and sustainably in the future. Helen notes that such a conversation necessarily pulls up the deeper

issues. "Talking about food security pushes us into the territory of wealth distribution."

Helen says that a significant number of New Zealanders simply don't have enough money. "Current benefit levels, and even the living wage, aren't adequate despite the latest increases. Someone on the minimum wage and paying rent,

"This country produces enough food to feed all its people. So production is not the problem; the problem is who gets what."

will end up with, say, \$100 left to pay for food, power and everything else. It's even more challenging for those who are trying to raise a family on a benefit.

Helen says that people have got that there's a housing problem in Aotearoa New Zealand. "They understand that there is a considerable number of people who do not have access to quality,

IN THIS ISSUE

- 4 Taking Stock – Introducing the Aotearoa Standard Measure
- 6 Valuing and Resourcing Volunteers
- 7 Salvation Army Opens Social Housing
- 7 'My Whare' Sleepouts Win Award
- 8 New Service to Help Christchurch East Seniors Thrive
- 9 Counselling in Schools is Well Received
- 10 Improving the Joint Venture for Family and Sexual violence
- 10 Vaccines and the Workplace
- 11 Addressing False Vaccination Information
- 11 Feedback Sought on Social Cohesion
- 12 New Chief for New Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

appropriate, safe and affordable housing". She attributes that awareness to the high media focus over the last four to five years. "But New Zealanders don't understand that we have a food problem."

The good thing, she adds, is that while most New Zealanders don't understand the problem, they are willing to hear about it. That gives Helen hope. "The wonderful thing about this role is that I get to see the



Auckland City Missioner Helen Robinson at her formal welcoming, accompanied by Waiora Port.

generosity of Auckland. I get to see the undergirding of compassion.”

That generosity is most recently visible in the development of the Auckland City Mission’s 80-apartment development HomeGround. The Mission is in high gear for the development’s opening in November.

In conceiving of HomeGround the Mission wanted a place where pragmatic hands-on services support those who need it most. As well as providing safe and permanent shelter for Aucklanders who have been rough sleeping, HomeGround will also provide a healthcare centre,

including a pharmacy and dental practice, a state-of-the-art detox facility, and a community dining room catering up to 250 guests per day. The site also includes spaces that will be available for social enterprises.

Helen says that development embodies the Mission’s ethos that housing people in need, and providing wraparound services to support them, is paramount to changing the circumstances of those experiencing homelessness.

“Having all the services under one roof will make the enormous task of supporting those in need, a reality.”

Wellington City Mission

Murray Edridge, Wellington City Missioner describes the last year as fascinating, “Dickensian, even”... ie, the best of times, the worst of times. “Clearly, the last year brought challenges,” says Murray. “We faced enormous requirements at a time when, theoretically, we had restricted access to resources. But there was also celebration

around what we achieved, like the responsiveness of local and central government, and just unprecedented levels of support from the general public.”

Challenge and Celebration are only two-thirds of Murray’s COVID equation – the 3 Cs. The third component? Change.

“The lockdown response period gave us an opportunity to examine everything that we do here. We said to ourselves, let’s not revert back, let’s not go back to doing anything that we’ve not tested and evaluated as optimum.”

It’s this evaluation that, in Murray’s words, has irrevocably changed the focus of the Mission.

The outworking of that change can be seen in the reinvention of the Mission’s former drop-in centre. For decades the drop-in centre has provided a hot meal for both breakfast and lunch, four days a week. “People would queue up, pay a modest sum for the meal, eat then leave. There’d be no one in the place after 1.30pm.

“What the period of COVID response showed us is that people were actually getting food okay. But what they weren’t getting was community,” says Murray.

It is the focus on building community that became the driver for the decision to stop providing the two daily meals. In its place is a community lounge offering café-style food. “We took the tables out,



Wellington City Missioner Murray Edridge at the Mission’s social supermarket.

removed a few walls, laid down carpet, repainted, added lights and sofas. The result is a warmer, more welcoming space. People can stay all day and be nurtured and encouraged, and treated with dignity and respect.”

Evidently, it’s touched a nerve. “In the first six weeks, 3,000 came through the door – with no advertising, just purely word of mouth.”

The community lounge has in effect become a test-run for the Mission’s bigger future plans. As part of the Mission’s development of Whakamaru, a multi-purpose community hub in the Wellington CBD, it is planning a public café, a space offering a nice meal at a reasonable price. “And the best coffee in Wellington,” adds Murray. Whakamaru, meaning to shelter, to safeguard, to protect, is due for completion September 2022.

For Murray, a fundamental component of the concept is creating spaces where people find themselves alongside ‘others’. “That’s when people discover that ‘others’ aren’t bad, aren’t evil, that they’re just like ‘us’.”

Whakamaru will embrace that intentionality of community, not only

A fundamental component of the concept is creating spaces where people find themselves alongside ‘others’.

in the café space. The complex will incorporate 35 supported housing units alongside office space for the Mission’s staff and volunteers. “Our staff and volunteers will be sharing common spaces with the residents so we’re clearly pushing some

boundaries. But again, how else do you build different connection with people?”

Another significant shift for the Mission is a transition away from the provision of food parcels. This shift came about through asking some hard questions. How do we provide people with dignity when they are in a place of need? How do we remove the whakama/shame? The answer, says Murray, is by providing them with the dignity of choice – and so the social supermarket was birthed.

Currently running as a trial, the Mission’s social supermarket is a joint venture with Mission supporters New World. “Foodstuffs really got on board with what we wanted to do and essentially built us a supermarket. It looks exactly like a supermarket with some 3000 products on the shelves.”

‘Shoppers’ at the social supermarket are hosted and supported to select an appropriate range of products to meet their needs and those of their whānau. As they accompany the shoppers, the support workers or volunteers are able to determine whether an offer of budgeting or other support may be helpful.

Murray says what matters most is the user experience. “The thing that elicited the most emotional response from shoppers is being offered a trolley. For these shoppers, trollies represent equality – that they are like everyone else; that they are going to

actually be able to fill a trolley.”

Another mana-enhancing aspect of the Mission’s supermarket is the range of products. “It’s not all budget lines on the shelves. We aim to provide the best we can offer.” Again, dignity and respect.

In transitioning to the social supermarket model Murray says he believes the Mission is helping more Wellingtonians than through food parcel distribution. That said, he is proud of the Mission’s long serving of food distribution. “We still have emergency food provision and always will. But we would love to be at the point where we don’t need to distribute food at all.”

Christchurch City Mission

Christchurch City Missioner **Matthew Mark** said that before March 2020, the Mission was seeing a consistent trajectory upward in the demand for food parcels. During the lockdown period of COVID-19, that demand trebled, and then plateaued for around six weeks at a slightly lower level. “Now we’re back to a consistent growth in demand month on month,” says Matthew.

The Mission closely tracks its activities to determine the drivers behind trends. “We know that for the first four months post lockdown, 40 percent of those coming to us were first-time users, people who’d never



Matthew Mark

engaged with a social service before.”

That cohort has lessened in more recent months. “While demand overall is still increasing, those who’ve never previously engaged with social service agencies is sitting around 12–13 percent.”

Matthew says the Mission is on target for distribution of 67,000 food parcels by the financial year end. “There are still a lot of extra people who’re needing the practical support of putting food on the table.”

So how is the Mission meeting that continuing trajectory? It uses a two-fold approach – a process and a pathway.

“The process is that we meet the immediate need of the family or individual. The pathway is finding a long-term sustainable solution so

that they don’t have to keep coming back to get that support. We take a long-term view with the people with whom we work. This may mean that they receive food support from us for a month, maybe six weeks, while we

While we address the food need it’s really about those other drivers, like mental health. And those things require the creation of meaningful sustainable societal change.

find solutions to the reasons they’re in a place of need.”

The Mission draws its support from a number of sources. Since the

country went into COVID-response mode, it has been receiving MSD funding but it also partners with New World in particular, and more recently, with the wider Foodstuffs network. The Mission is also part of a network across Canterbury that share resources across a number of foodbanks. “This ensures a fair distribution of products and that there’s no storing up of resources that could get out to places that we might not reach.”

The rest of the Mission’s food support comes through the Christchurch community and the Mission is seeing that community generosity increasing. “Over the last four months particularly we’ve noticed an increase in groups getting on board and more ingenuity around the ways organisations and corporates are approaching social responsibility.”

Few would argue that Christchurch has had it rough over the last 10 years. If earthquakes, acts of terrorism and COVID-19 aren’t enough, the recent flooding in Canterbury added to the response burden for support organisations.

“Our South Canterbury cohort was more impacted by the flooding, but we still had around a dozen suburbs that were affected.” The Mission moved into the familiar gear of distributing household items and food support but came up with another idea. “We filled a minivan with men that were staying in our





Christchurch City Mission cleaning the fenceline.

emergency accommodation and drove them to Ashburton where they helped clear debris from farm fences.” Matthew says it was a way of giving back to those who give to them. “I say to the people we serve, that the Mission works at the privilege of the community. We wouldn’t be able to do what we do without their generosity. The guys jumped at the opportunity to give back.”

That simple initiative of doing something for others reflects the Mission’s desire to work with people in ways that are mana enhancing. To do that, though, requires an understanding of where people are at. Matthew says that how the Mission had to adapt its food distribution logistics during lockdown impacted its ability to get alongside people. “By delivering food to people rather than them coming to us, we

were missing having meaningful conversations. We weren’t able to gain an understanding about the drivers behind their needing that food support.” Armed with such understanding, the Mission is able to connect people with its other services such as budget and financial mentorship programmes, education, and work readiness programmes. “When people come in here there’s a whole suite of things to which we can connect them, to give them the best outcomes.”

Matthew says that food poverty is mostly just a symptom. “While we address the food need it’s really about those other drivers, like mental health. And those things require the creation of meaningful sustainable societal change.” So for everything the Mission does, it applies the lens: what is the impact on creating that meaningful

and sustainable change in our community?

With an eye to positioning itself as the agent of change for the future, the Mission is progressing a massive building development. The now fully-funded project incorporates a 15-bed transitional housing facility, along with the Thrive café and catering business, the Mission’s social enterprises.

A second stage of its development plans include support worker spaces, a warehouse, and a self-serve foodbank. The self-serve foodbank will follow the same lines as the Wellington City Mission’s social supermarket.

“Once again, it’s about enhancing peoples’ mana, by providing an environment where they have choice.”

Taking Stock – introducing the Aotearoa Standard Measure

The covid lockdown period in 2020 unearthed a number of significant social issues that were bubbling under the surface in Aotearoa New Zealand. Food poverty was one of them. And while not previously hidden, exactly, it’s an issue that took more centre stage as people were unable to access food from their usual sources.

Keen to respond, the government approached [Kore Hiakai Zero Hunger Collective](#) to identify the depth and breadth of need. With its extensive reach into food communities across the country, Kore Hiakai has developed as a connection point for all things community food distribution. In trying to get a handle on the issue – and rapidly – Kore Hiakai Pou Arahi/Executive Officer Tric Malcolm says a number of the anomalies of the sector became apparent. “For a start,” says Tric, “there was not even a common understanding of what makes up a food parcel. That’s not necessarily a bad thing. It can mean that there’s a level of adaption for a whānau’s individual need, which is a good thing. But with deeper investigation, what it could also mean, is that for



Aotearoa Standard Food Parcel Measure

some food providers, the focus has been more on providing food that fills rather than food that constitutes good nutrition.”

The lack of a measure to evidence sector practice makes not only quantifying the problem an impossibility but also shaping a response. Addressing that led to Kore Hiakai undertaking research in August 2020 to plug the knowledge gap. Kore Hiakai invited 42 community food organisations to participate in a survey. Thirty-four →

organisations from 15 locations around the motu responded.

The key findings from that research showed:

- All 34 responders varied in their definition of a food parcel
- Sizes of parcels differed vastly including around what constituted small, medium or large
- Food distributors varied in the number of days of support provided for and also in nutritional value
- Most (80%) applied judgement in preparing parcels depending on what food/produce was available at the time when endeavouring to address nutritional value
- Four responders had consulted the advice a professional nutritionist/dietitian
- More than a quarter of community food distributors regularly provide fresh fruit and vegetables; 65% sometimes. Donations of fresh produce is the largest determinant on inclusion
- Different organisations have different protocols as to who receives their parcels.

See the [full research report here](#).

Tric says that since COVID, more community organisations have become involved in food provision. “Government funding made available for food distribution during

COVID lockdown saw many more organisations enabled to provide food, especially mārae. And many have stayed with it.” Tric observes that the newer entrants tend to position themselves as distinct from foodbanks. “‘Foodbank’ as a term has become a dirty word. It’s associated with an old school, judgmental approach, one that’s transactional, more about doing something ‘to’ people rather than ‘with’ them. A lot of the newer community food providers are distancing themselves from that and their protocols can be quite different.”

Undeterred by the lack of

Getting an accurate measure on the volume of food needed is the linchpin to ensuring all communities in Aotearoa New Zealand have the food support they need.

standardisation revealed, Kore Hiakai next set about developing a workable common standard for what constitutes a parcel that delivers on the daily nutritional requirements for good health. The result 10 months later: the Aotearoa Standard Food Parcel Measure.

In launching the Standard in June 2021, Tric says Kore Hiakai is not asking the country’s community food distributors to change their practice.

“Rather, we’re inviting them to use the Standard Measure to calculate what they are currently distributing. We know that the nutritional aspect may challenge the current make up of many food parcels. Together we will address that going forward.”

What is the Standard Aotearoa Food Parcel Measure? In shorthand, the measure is expressed in a deceptively simple sounding formula: 4x3x4@80%

Decoded, this means a standard food parcel provides for:

- four people – 2 adults + 2 tamariki; 1 adult + 3 tamariki, etc.
- four days
- three meals a day.

And the food provided meets 80% nutritional standards.

The Standard measure can be multiplied or divided. A larger family might receive one-and-a-half or two food parcels. A single person may receive a quarter. “The measure can be scaled up or down according to people’s needs and still allow for the consistent measurement of food that is being distributed,” says Tric.

A guide on nutritional standards accompanies the measure. The guide provides examples of a Standard Food Parcel, serving sizes, and food that fits into each of the food groups. It examples food provision at 100 percent of nutrition standards. But, importantly it also recognises and encourages the place of whānau choice, which is why the standard measure is set at 80 percent. Kore



Hiakai has tested the measure with several foodbanks and gained approval from health professionals and a dietitian.

Attaining the nutritional standards becomes easier when fresh food is added to parcels. However, sourcing fresh food is one of the greatest challenges for community food providers.

“We know that it will be difficult for foodbanks to source all the food included in the nutritional guide,” says Tric. “So we’re building opportunities to work with nationwide organisations like New Zealand Food Network and Aotearoa Food Rescue Alliance to make

available the whole spectrum of food to community providers.”

With the Standard launched, Kore Hiakai’s work on the measure is far from over. The Auckland City Mission is one of the country’s foodbanks that will be piloting the Standard. Kore Hiakai will be working closely with the Mission and other community food distributors to monitor the robustness of the tool. “Getting an accurate measure on the volume of food needed is the linchpin to ensuring all communities in Aotearoa New Zealand have the food support they need.”

See the [Food Parcel Nutritional Guide here](#).

Valuing and Resourcing Volunteers

Churches run on volunteers – always have and, most likely, always will. The same applies to the social services sector. Wellington Catholic Social Services (CSS) Kaiārahi/Director Karen Holland affirms that they are a vital part of the mix. “There are never enough resources, never enough social workers, to address the needs in our communities. Volunteers bridge the gap.”



Karen Holland

In bridging that gap, social services sector volunteers are often working with isolated and vulnerable people. This can raise issues around safety, not only of the volunteers but perhaps particularly of the isolated and vulnerable people they encounter.

Ensuring that volunteers are

supported to continue their valued contribution in a way that is both safe for them and the people they serve, is the goal of a new initiative developed by CSS.

In part, the idea to develop a training programme stemmed from a 2019 review by CSS of its services. The review showed that despite the organisation’s wide geographic coverage – from Otaki to Kaikoura – mostly, its services were accessed in the Wellington CBD. This insight led to CSS questioning how it could extend its reach to the wider area it serves, particularly in light of the theme set by the Archdiocese of Wellington 2017 Synod: Go, you are sent.

The subsequent reflection and conversations resulted in a strategic refocusing by CSS. The organisation has realigned its work to focus more on enabling local parishes to address the needs of their own communities – and especially, on strengthening the volunteer workforce.

The resultant emphasis on training is not new territory for Karen. She came to the role of Wellington CSS Kaiārahi from

managing Wellington’s Compassion Soup Kitchen. Before that, she was the Wellington Archdiocese community facilitator overseeing a broad range of community-based projects. This included the Archdiocese partnership with Red Cross and the Wellington Anglican Diocese to set up homes for former refugees settling in Wellington.

“I’ve been heavily involved in training volunteers over the years.” Its experience that CSS has benefited from in furthering its own approach to its volunteers. “We treat our volunteers in the same way that we

We are not about building another layer of social expertise. What we are focused on is creating safe friendships.

treat employees. We get reference checks, we police vet and we provide peer supervision,” says Karen.” While it’s an approach that helps ensure volunteers are ‘safe’ for the task, it also communicates to volunteers that what they do is taken seriously and that they are valued.

The training programme designed by CSS contains practical aspects of volunteering. It also seeks to help volunteers identify potential blind spots that may negatively influence their interactions with those they serve.

The four modules cover:

- **Volunteering Basics** – understanding the mission and kaupapa of Catholic Social Services, and the principles and policy of being a volunteer.
- **Boundaries** – learning about personal safety, with an overview of personal vulnerability. It covers applicable legislation such as the Privacy Act and the Children’s Act.
- **Self-Awareness** – a time of self-examination to grow an understanding of any implicit biases, sub conscious reactions. The module includes the building of cultural competency.
- **Skills** – addressing situational awareness and conflict escalation, with a focus on achieving great outcomes from challenging situations.

Karen says that the module on self-awareness is by far the most challenging for volunteers. Arguably it’s the most important. “It’s the hidden things about ourselves that cause the conflict and we all have biases. The self-reflection is way of helping volunteers recognise and acknowledge their biases so they can take them into account in their interactions.”

Karen observes that some groups of volunteers can be more resistant to the idea of training. “We can encounter a bit of reluctance with people who have been volunteering

for some time. Because they’ve been involved for so long, they’re inclined to believe that they know everything.”

This is where the self-awareness module can prove personally stretching.

Karen says that she finds young people great. “They really embrace the opportunity to gain skills and tools.”

An underpinning emphasis of the training is building volunteers’ understanding that their role is one of befriending. “We are not about building another layer of social expertise. What we are focused on is creating safe friendships.”

To aid that, the programme upsills volunteers with the tools to refer people to the appropriate agencies.

In rolling out the training, Wellington CSS is taking it slow. “We want to get it right. We want to be sure that we can support volunteers. Through this training we have something real to offer, and we see an opportunity to break down barriers that sometimes exist between parishes.”

“But it’s not just for Catholics!” says Karen. “We’re in a season for coordination and welcome the opportunity to work with anyone.”

The Wellington CCSS volunteer training programme is currently provided by Karen and the CSS Community Facilitator Paul Alsford. To find out more, [contact Karen here](#).

Salvation Army Opens Social Housing Developments

Featured in our [last issue of Kete Kupu](#) in the story on Community Finance, the Salvation Army's new social housing developments in Auckland opened in June.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Minister of Housing Megan Woods opened the newly completed developments at Westgate and Flatbush.

The complexes – Te Manaaki Tāngata in Westgate and Kaitiakitanga in Flatbush – represent a high bar in social housing. Each home is highly energy efficient, has whānau-centred design, and is part of a complex that incorporates community facilities, chaplaincy support where needed and excellent

tenancy management. The homes are designed first and foremost to foster a supportive community, with plenty of room for groups to gather, including garden spaces.

Residents will receive ongoing support from the Salvation Army and its breadth of services to strengthen relationships and encourage whanaungatanga/kinship.

The opening of these housing complexes takes The Salvation Army's social housing provision to three communities, encompassing

118 one-and two-bedroom homes. The developments have been funded through the Salvation Army Bond facilitated through impact investment platform [Community Finance](#).

■ Westgate – Te Manaaki Tāngata: 22 homes – 20 x 2brm and 2 x 1brm units. All tenants in the units are on the Housing Register and include a number of young families. Units were built by Meridian, and the architects were Fat Parrot. The homes were built using Formance SIP panels, which have a far higher insulation value than traditional building products. In addition, extraction and air circulation systems contribute to warmer, drier and electrically efficient homes.

■ Flatbush – Kaitiakitanga (guardianship and protection): 46 units – 36 x 2brm and 10 x 1brm units. Built by Meridian, and the architects were Fat Parrot. Same building materials as used in Westgate. More than 300 referrals were received from social service agencies for the 46 units.



The Manaaki Tāngata, Westgate Housing Community.

'My Whare' Sleepouts Win Award

In our October 2020 issue of [Kete Kupu](#) we featured an article on [Visionwest Community Trust's innovative transportable sleep out studios](#) designed to help address youth homelessness.

Called My Whare, the youth housing project is a collaboration between Visionwest and Strachan Group Architects (SGA) that recently won a prestigious NZIA (New Zealand Institute of Architects) Small Project Architecture Award.

Brook Turner, Visionwest Services Head of Development and Partnerships says, "This vote of confidence from the architect

community adds more momentum to a project with the innovative flare to change the approach to solving homelessness."

My Whare is more than four walls and a roof. It is a programme designed to connect a young person to a stable family environment through placing a My Whare sleepout in the host family's backyard and integrating the young person into a supportive community with the help of a specialised youth worker.

James Widgery, General Manager of Community Housing at Visionwest says "The collaboration with Pat de Pont and SGA shows what can happen when community works together to address one of Aotearoa's most challenging problems."

With 1% of New Zealanders homeless or housing deprived and some reports suggesting up to half of these are under 25, the hope is that the My Whare initiative can be shared with other community groups enabling more Kiwis to join the mission to solve youth homelessness for good.

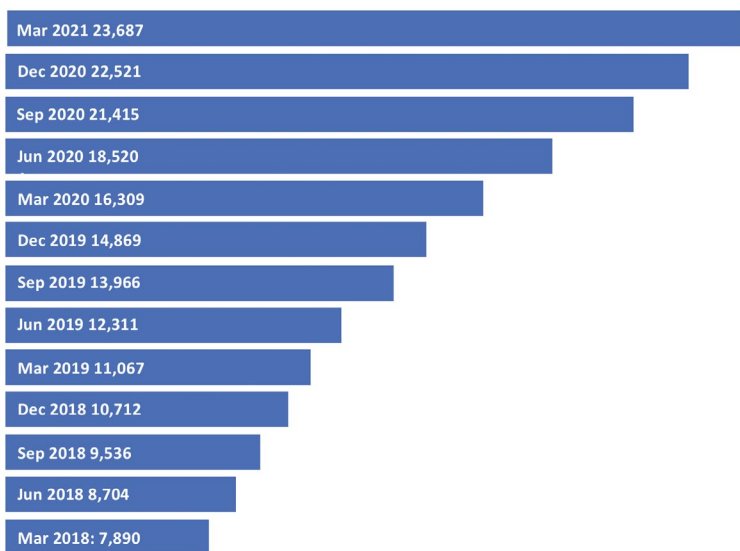


Visionwest's Brook Turner far left and Pat de Pont, SGA architect far right.

Public Housing Register as at March 2021

The Housing Register captures the housing requirements of people who have applied for public housing through MSD.

Public Housing Demand: Housing Register as at March 2021



Source: HUD Public Housing Quarterly Report March 2021

The demand for public housing has increased in all housing regions during the March quarter and compared to March 2020. The top five increases by percentage, in the Housing register compared to March 2020 were Taranaki (157% or 459 applicants), Canterbury (73% or 876 applicants), Northland (70% or 412 applicants), Central (63% or 544 applicants) and West Coast Tasman (52% or 277 applicants).

Source: [Public Housing Quarterly Report March 2021](#), Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

New Service to Help Christchurch East Seniors Thrive

Christchurch has been in the throes of considerable reconstruction for years following the devastating earthquakes of over a decade ago. Significant parts of the city are well into recovery with residents able to move on. However, Presbyterian Support Upper South Island has had a growing concern for residents for whom recovery has not gone so well.

Putting hands and feet to that concern, the social services provider has established a small team in Christchurch's eastern suburbs to provide a range of supports to older residents.

Enliven East Christchurch Kaumātua Service aims to support the independence, social inclusion,

health and wellbeing of kaumatua/ older people and their whanau.

Having identified this cohort as a gap, Presbyterian Support is working with colleagues across the sector to identify and address the issues that are preventing kaumatua in this part of the city from thriving.

The team consists of three social

workers and psychologist who will provide a range of services including:

- Advocacy
- Psychology
- Whanau/ family support
- Counselling.

The services are provided free to those in need.



Counselling in Schools is Well Received

Children often seem so resilient that we can forget how incredibly sensitive they can be to what's going on around them. The reality is, almost 50% of children suffer some sort of anxiety issues meaning children often need counselling support the same as adults do.

For some time, Visionwest Counselling Centre has been a provider of the Your Choice DHB Counselling Programme for 12–24-year-olds. More recently, the Centre has been contracted to provide one-on-one and group counselling sessions for younger children in our local primary and intermediate schools. The pre-existing need for these sessions intensified over COVID lockdown times as many children grappled with the uncertainty of those times and the events surrounding them.

As part of the Kotuitui Programme, children will be provided ten one-on-one sessions across the term, the focus being to create safe trusting relationships in which children feel able to share their concerns in a way that comes easy to children of their age.

They will also be part of group sessions made up of five or six children with the aim being to process the anxiety of living in uncertain times and to be empowered by recognising that others in their peer group feel the same way. Two sessions of support will be offered to the parents of each child to ensure the strategies taught for managing anxiety can be reinforced.

During a recent feedback



session, a couple of happy parents shared their impressions of the Programme. One wrote, “My child has become more confident in group settings because her previous fear of rejection has been helped. She has become more independent with her decision-making and has the confidence to solve problems herself. She has started talking with us about her feelings and, if she has any concerns, she expresses them. She looks forward to her counselling meetings and has spoken of them in such a positive way.”

Another wrote, “Our child has a new-found confidence in himself. He’s coping well, willing to listen to ideas and plan together, and able to communicate his feelings. He thought the counsellor was amazing. As a family, we really appreciate what Visionwest has done for our family.”

It’s hoped that we will soon be able to extend this service offering to other schools, including local intermediate schools.

Tenancy Advocates Regional Hui

The Tenancy Advocates Network (TAN) is a network of advocacy organisations formed in 2016 to support the rights, interest and welfare of tenants, particularly those in vulnerable situations or living in poor quality premises.

The group communicates and meets regularly to monitor developments in the rental sector including around cost and supply issues, new regulations, landlord activities and support agency sustainability.

As part of NZCCSS’s co-ordination role for the Tenant’s Advocacy Network, we are organising regional meetings in areas where there is particular pressure on rental housing. At the end of June, TAN hosted a regional hui in Tauranga, inviting representatives from



organisations across the Bay of Plenty with housing and tenancy services. Topics for discussion included affordability and control of rent, the regulation of property managers, resourcing of tenant advocacy organisations.

Also the recently published website, Aratohu, was introduced. The group welcomed

the opportunity to become part of the network, to collaborate, share information and contribute to policy on tenancy.

The Tauranga event was well attended and warm spirited.

The next regional hui is planned for Queenstown, 25 August. Please email NZCCSS policy analyst Betsan Martin for details:

betsan@nzccss.org.nz

The Power of the Collective Voice

Interview with New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services Policy Analyst Sonia Scott

Helping the public sector to understand what it is to walk in others' shoes is a strong raison d'être for NZCCSS Policy Analyst Sonia Scott.

It's a motivation that has fueled her work at the Council over the last eight years.



NZCCSS Policy Analyst Sonia Scott

Referring to herself as an 'honorary New Zealander', Sonia settled here from the United Kingdom over 30 years ago, keen to do a field study of sorts after finishing her studies in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. She came, she saw, and, loving the landscape, she stayed. Sonia's career in Aotearoa over three decades has covered a range of roles primarily in the public sector, including three secondments to parliament as a private secretary. "Over the years I've had a solid grounding in political and governmental processes. Now, working in the NGO sector, that's balanced through seeing what happens to policy when it is implemented in a range of settings."

Sonia's introduction to the work of NZCCSS was as an intern while completing her Masters of Public Policy through Wellington's University of Victoria in 2012. A key task during that internship was the drafting of a white paper on vulnerable children, a project she valued immensely. When a role for a part time Policy Analyst became available in 2014, Sonia readily pursued the opportunity.

A strong attraction for Sonia was the context of faith in social service provision. "I was – and am – taken with the passion of Council member organisations and the significant contribution they make to communities around Aotearoa New Zealand."

Sonia's breadth of experience across the full policy continuum has given her an informed view of what makes good public policy. "It requires a deep understanding of the diversity of our country and a willingness to walk in others' shoes."

And ensuring that "others' shoes" are put in front of public policymakers is where Sonia sees the Council's significant area of influence.

"Our members are working in their local communities, they know the

demographics not just hypothetically but from on-the-ground experience. This is not something necessarily at the forefront for the public sector. And through the Council, we can bring an understanding that is drawn from the length and breadth of the motu, from national organisations to small service providers."

As an example of the potential influence of the collective voice, Sonia cites the Bill recently put before parliament revising the Subsequent Child Policy. The original policy, which was introduced in 2012, placed obligations on parents to look for and to return to work earlier if they have an additional child while receiving a main benefit.

"When the policy was first implemented, our members identified that it would negatively impact vulnerable mothers. Our members saw this policy causing distress and hardship, penalising both sole parents and their children."

Though the decision to revise the legislation was a while in coming, Sonia says that the recent revision still reflects the power of collective feedback from the flax roots.

So how does the voice of NZCCSS members make its way to decisionmakers?

When Government proposes a

piece of legislation, the NZCCSS Secretariat determines whether the proposals are within the sphere of NZCCSS. If determined to be of interest, the policy analysts distribute the proposed legislation to the relevant Council Policy Group members. The analysts then consult with members and draft the submission documents to be put before the applicable parliamentary

"Now, I think there is a greater groundswell that we need to do more for the least in our communities."

select committee. The submission process also involves NZCCSS making in-person oral presentation of submissions to the committees, usually by the Executive Officer and Council or Policy Group members.

Eight years on, Sonia remains an unreserved proponent of the influencing potential of the Council. For Sonia, what feeds that enthusiasm is the Christian mission – love, compassion and hope. "I see the enormous dedication of our members, not just in what they do but in how they do it. I see the manaakitanga as they walk alongside the vulnerable of this country."

The key issues that Sonia sees confronting New Zealand right now focus on stemming the increasing creep of poverty. "We really need to address the issues facing the lowest quartile in this country. And we need greater solutions for addressing child poverty.

Sonia is hopeful. "I think there has been a recent tide change. In the past there seemed to be almost an acceptance that some New Zealanders didn't have enough to live on. Now, I think there is a greater groundswell that we need to do more for the least in our communities."

Achieving transformation for the lives of those who have the least in Aotearoa is something that Sonia and the team at the NZCCSS Secretariat will continue to work towards.

Sonia lives with her husband, teenage son and fur baby Koko in Wellington where she has been part of the Catholic community for many years. Before working for NZCCSS she gave time to the Petone-based Faith and Light group which worked alongside young people with disabilities, and their families and caregivers. While she loves Aotearoa New Zealand and has firmly made it her home, Sonia maintains strong connections with her whānau in the United Kingdom.

Recommendations to Improve the Joint Venture for Family and Sexual Violence

An Auditor-General's report into the progress of the Joint Venture for Family Violence and Sexual Violence recommends the building of stronger ties with the NGO sector as one of the improvements to support the joint venture achieve its objectives.

The joint venture was formed in 2018 with the accountability of significantly reducing family and sexual violence. New ministerial arrangements, new public service governance arrangements, and new ways for agencies to work – both together, and with Māori and NGOs in the sector – were envisaged as part of the new approach.

Agencies involved in the venture include the Accident Compensation Corporation, the Department of Corrections, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Social Development, the New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The Controller and Auditor-General John Ryan commissioned an audit of the joint venture with a view to make any needed improvements early. Some potentials were identified.



While the audit determined that there were high levels of good will and commitment to improved outcomes, many people interviewed said that the venture was not working effectively as it needs to. In setting five recommendations to support the achievement of change, the Auditor-General expressed the view that “the joint venture could not be approached as just another programme”. From his report:

■ To achieve transformational change, everyone involved, from

Ministers to agency staff, needs to have a clear and shared understanding of what they are seeking to achieve, their respective roles, and accountabilities. The joint venture also needs to agree with Māori what their partnership means in practice.

■ In our view, the joint venture's partnership with Māori can be successful only when government agencies and the responsible Ministers are realistic

and clear about what a partnership means.

■ Similarly, the joint venture needs to invest significant time and effort in building relationships with NGOs and other stakeholder groups. The agencies involved also need to consider that resourcing the joint venture's work is core to their role.

You can read the [full report](#) – or the [summary](#) – [here](#)

Vaccines and the Workplace

Employment New Zealand has produced general guidance for workplaces to help them determine responsibilities and requirements as the roll-out of the COVID-19 vaccines progresses.

The guidance covers health and safety, privacy and employment considerations for businesses, and includes ways workplaces can support their workers in accessing the vaccination.

Topics the guidelines cover include:

- Supporting the vaccination campaign – examples ways businesses can help workers to access vaccination without facing costs or disadvantage
- Continuing with other public health measures – encourages businesses to maintain the steps needed to eliminate or minimise risks
- COVID-19 vaccination will not be needed for most work – explains the factors for determining what work can be designated vaccinated only workers
- A person's vaccination status is personal information – explains how the Privacy Act applies to vaccination status including when recruiting, and protecting personal information
- Employment law continues to apply if work cannot be done by unvaccinated employees



– explains the application of employment law where work can only be done by a vaccinated worker

- Amending employment agreements and workplace policies – outlines changes that can be made to employment agreements and workplace policies
- Options for workers concerned about unvaccinated colleagues – outlines workers' rights to stop or refuse to carry out work and rights to request changes to their work arrangements
- Sharing vaccine misinformation – explains the role of businesses in any incidences of vaccine misinformation being shared in the workplace.

See the guidelines here: [Vaccines and the workplace](#)

Addressing False Vaccination Information

As the COVID-19 vaccination programme progresses in this country, so too does the concern over the spread of misinformation. International experience shows that false information will be widely circulated as the COVID-19 response continues. The government is encouraging us all to play a part in helping to reduce the impact. Here's some guidance.

Get the facts

Not everything online or in unofficial leaflets is factual and accurate. We can quickly and subconsciously accept news that aligns with our beliefs and negatively react to information that is different. It's important to take time and reflect when you read something about the COVID-19 vaccine, before acting.

You can cross-check and review information about the vaccine by using the reliable sources listed below.

- [Ministry of Health](#)
- [Unite Against COVID-19](#)
- [Local District Health Boards \(DHBs\)](#)
- Your GP, pharmacist or health professional.

Take care what you share

Social media companies typically use algorithms to pick up false

and misleading information. You may have seen a flag or small message on certain posts advising that the information is related to COVID-19 and will link you to a trusted source. These aren't 100% fool proof. It's important to remain vigilant with the information you share or post online.

Report false or misleading information

Any false or misleading information such as leaflets, publications or websites can be [reported to CERT NZ](#), either [online](#) or by calling 0800 2378 69.

You can report what you believe to be false or misleading information seen on social media to the respective social media platform eg Facebook, Twitter etc. These platforms have buttons or forms through which you can report this information.

Know what you're dealing with

There are different kinds of false and misleading information:

- **Misinformation** – false information but not created with the intention of causing harm (eg misleading vaccine information shared with good intent).
- **Disinformation** – false information and deliberately created to harm (eg ideologies and theories purposely giving misleading or dated vaccine information).
- **Malinformation** – information based on reality that's used to inflict harm on a person, organisation or country (eg leaks of private information that has been deliberately changed).

■ **Scams** – based on reality, but aiming to extort information and/or money (eg advertising advising of early access to vaccination for a fee).



Government seeks Public Feedback on Social Cohesion

The government has launched a significant programme of engagement aimed at strengthening social cohesion and building a safer, more tolerant and inclusive society, underpinned by Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

The engagement programme offers an opportunity for New Zealanders to share what they think about:

1. **social cohesion** – from how it should be defined and measured, to how it can be fostered, strengthened and supported, to making sure everyone feels like they genuinely belong.
2. **proposed changes to the Human Rights Act**, which aim to strengthen protections against speech that incites hatred and

discrimination. The incitement of hatred against a group based on a shared characteristic, such as ethnicity, religion or sexuality, is an attack on our values of inclusiveness and diversity. Such incitement is intolerable and has no place in our society.

How you can get involved

The engagement includes online consultation and face-to-face meetings.



A word for the nervous

Mirjam Guesgen, a contributing writer in *The Spinoff*, offers reassurance to the nervous, explaining some of the side effects that only a minor number of people have experienced following vaccination.

Read the article [here](#).

1. The Ministry of Social Development is leading a programme over the next few months asking the public whether there are changes people would like to see that would make Aotearoa New Zealand more socially cohesive and what success might look like.

For more information or to make a submission, please go to [Social Cohesion Consultation Hub – Citizen Space](#)

You can also email social_cohesion@msd.govt.nz with any questions.

Post feedback or submission to: Ministry of Social Development, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140, New Zealand.

2. The Ministry of Justice is seeking public feedback on six in-principle proposals for changing the law against speech that incites hatred and discrimination and wants to know if they meet society's expectations. For more information, please go to <https://consultations.justice.govt.nz/>.

- Find out about the six in-principle proposals [here](#)
- Complete an online questionnaire [here](#)
- Ask a question, or email feedback or a submission to: humanrights@justice.govt.nz
- Post feedback or a submission to: Human Rights, Ministry of Justice, SX10088, Wellington.

3. The Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Justice are hosting a series of hui to hear public views. The hui will be facilitated by Litmus, an independent social research firm.

To register, please click on the location you can attend below, and complete the registration form. Please note, numbers are limited.

- Hamilton: Tuesday, 27 July, 10am – 1 pm, <https://hamiltonhuiregistration.eventbrite.co.nz>
- Christchurch: Tuesday, 3 August, 10am – 1 pm, <https://christchurchhuiregistration.eventbrite.co.nz>

(Hui for Auckland and Wellington have already been held.)

New Chief for New Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission

Karen Orsborn has been appointed to the role of Tumu Whakarae – Chief Executive for the Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission. Ms Orsborn takes up the role from 1 July after leading the establishment of the Commission as Acting Chief Executive. During 2020, Ms Orsborn led the early set-up phase as Head of Secretariat for the Initial Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission (Initial Commission).

The Commission is charged with providing oversight of the nation's mental health and wellbeing system, holding the Government of the day and other decision makers to account for the health and wellbeing of all people in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ms Orsborn was previously Director, Health Quality Improvement and Deputy CEO at the Health Quality and Safety Commission (HQSC), leading national patient safety and quality improvement programmes across public and private hospitals, primary and community care, mental health and addiction services, and aged care.

In announcing the appointment Commission Chair Hayden Wano said, "With her broad experience and deep understanding of how the health system works, Karen will bring fresh eyes to this part of the sector."

Ms Orsborn says being able to draw on her broad health system experience will be invaluable as the Commission works to shine the light on the mental health and addiction system and the areas that contribute to wellbeing.

"Overhauling the system is a long game. It is going to take time and collective effort. We can all make a difference through small actions every day. One of the challenges we have, as a Commission and a mental health and wellbeing sector, is to balance long-term transformation with meeting critical needs for support and services right now, particularly for our children and young people."

"There are some great things happening at a grassroots level out in communities. Turning the system around for our kids and youth so that they are safe, happy, and well is what gets me out of bed in the morning. It's a huge privilege for me to serve our community through this role."

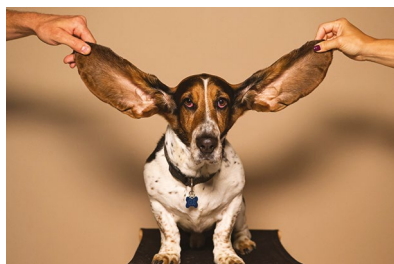
Visit the [Commission's website here](#).

You can read the Initial Mental Health and Wellbeing Commission's progress report to the Minister of Health, Mā Te Rongo Ake (Through Listening and Hearing), which was released on 5 March 2021 here: [Mā Te Rongo Ake, \[PDF, 7.5 MB\]](#)

NZ's First Children's Commissioner Remembered

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services notes with sadness the passing of Sir Ian Hassall, New Zealand's first Children's Commissioner and tireless advocate for the children of Aotearoa. As the inaugural Commissioner, Sir Ian set a high bar and influential legacy for the protection and promotion of the rights and wellbeing of tamariki. He will be long-remembered especially for his work to improve the lives of New Zealand's poorest children. Sir Ian passed away on Monday 14 June. He was 79.

Ngā mihi!



Many thanks to those of you who took up the invitation to bend our ears and invest a few minutes to complete our *Kete Kupu* readership survey. We appreciated your ratings and comments. We are looking to implement a number of changes to the publication in our Spring issue, in particular changes to make it a more interactive communication.

'Exploring tensions faced by faith-based social service practitioners working in the public sector'

Why?

This research hopes to explore the experiences of Christians who work in the health and social services sector.

We're interested in any issues and tensions you might face as a practicing Christian in your role at work.

How do you live out your faith at work? What are the challenges, and the rewards?

If you'd like to participate:

You will be invited to attend a face-to-face or online interview.

This interview will take place in an agreed location and time.

The interview will take approximately one hour.

You will receive a *koha* for your time.

Criteria for participation:

- You are a professional practitioner who is currently working, full or part time (for at least two years)
- Your workplace is **not** Faith-based (a secular health and social services provider)
- Affiliated to and preferably a practicing member of a Christian Faith group for at least two years.
- Willing and available for recorded interview.

Will it be confidential?

Yes.

All personal information, recordings and written information will be kept secure and confidential.

Participant pseudonyms will be used to ensure anonymity.

You and your organisation will be unidentifiable in any publications.

Who is carrying out this study?

We, Dr Rachel Tallon and Dr Joey Domdom, are tutors from the School of Health and Social Services at WelTec & Whitireia NZ. This research has been approved by the institutes' Ethics Committee, Reference # 270-2020.

What to do now

If you are interested in being part of this research or have further questions, please contact *Joey*:
joey.domdom@weltec.ac.nz



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

192 Tinakori Road, Thorndon
Wellington

To receive this newsletter in a different format (by mail), contact NZCCSS (04) 473 2627 or admin@nzccss.org.nz

Acknowledgements: In addition to its member subscriptions, NZCCSS extends its thanks to the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Social Development, Oranga Tamariki, and the University of Auckland for contract funding that help 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