



New Zealand Council Of  
Christian Social Services

The Catholic Church in New Zealand

*Te Hahi Katorika Ki Aotearoa*



The Methodist Church of New Zealand  
Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa

Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia  
*Te Hāhi Mihinare ki Aotearoa ki Niu Tirenī, ki Ngā Moutere o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa*

Presbyterian Church  
of Aotearoa New Zealand



Te Ope Whakāora

Friday 6 March 2009

Rt Hon John Key  
The Prime Minister and Cabinet  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

E te Pirimia tēnā koe,

As you may be aware the leaders of the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian and Salvation Army churches met with the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS), on Friday 27 February. At this meeting the local social impacts of the global economic crisis were discussed and a range of pragmatic responses to these impacts were identified.

Church leaders and Council representatives are very supportive of the efforts of government, businesses and unions to maintain as healthy an economy as possible and to reduce the numbers of jobs lost as a result of the global financial crisis. However, we note that job losses are inevitable. The impacts of the already increasing rate of unemployment are disproportionately felt by Māori whānau, by Pasifika and other immigrant families and by those in low wage/low skill employment. Of particular concern is the numbers of children who, without imaginative and proactive support, may have their life opportunities blighted by the impacts of poverty.

At our meeting we discussed pragmatic responses to the needs of those most affected by the economic crisis. We considered how the combined resources of our parish based service groups and our member social service organisations can best be coordinated to maximise their effectiveness. We also identified a number of areas where government policy support and resources will achieve the greatest level of support to those most affected by the recession. A set of messages and some key recommendations developed at our meeting is attached.

The practical knowledge and experience of NZCCSS members, both at service agency and at parish level, can make an extremely valuable contribution to ensuring responses to social needs are realistic and pragmatic. Member church leaders and Council members want to engage positively with government. We request the opportunity to meet as soon as possible to discuss how we can work together at this time of crisis.

Mā te Atua e tiaki

Yours sincerely,

Trevor McGlinchey, NZCCSS Executive Officer

**On behalf of:**

Shaun Robertson  
NZCCSS President

Donald Bell  
Salvation Army  
Territorial Commander

John Dew  
Catholic  
Archbishop

David Moxon  
Anglican  
Archbishop

Jill van de Geer  
Methodist  
President

Pamela Tankersley  
Presbyterian  
Former Moderator  
*(Representing Dr Graham Redding)*

Rodney Macann  
Baptist National Leader

*(Rodney McCann was not at the meeting but has considered and supports the recommendations)*

# Together we can ...

provide support for  
those New Zealanders  
most affected by the  
global economic crisis

A set of messages and some  
key recommendations from the  
leaders of the Anglican, Baptist,  
Catholic, Methodist,  
Presbyterian and Salvation  
Army churches and the  
New Zealand Council of  
Christian Social Services

March 2009



Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia  
*Te Hāhi Mihinare ki Aotearoa ki Niu Tīreni, ki Ngā Moutere o Te Moana Nui a Kiwa*



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Te Ope Whakāora



New Zealand Council of  
Christian Social Services

## INTRODUCTION

The member agencies of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) – the Anglican Care Network, Baptist Churches of New Zealand, Catholic Social Services, Presbyterian Support Services Inc and the Methodist and Salvation Army churches – along with parish based social services have a long and respected history of providing support during difficult times. As a grouping of faith based communities and service organisations we are one of the largest providers of social services in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Collectively we are preparing to respond to the accelerating needs caused by the global economic crisis.

On the same day as the Prime Minister's Jobs Summit, 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009, NZCCSS met with its member Church leadership to discuss the social impacts of the economic crisis on local communities. In contrast to the maintenance and creation of employment aims of the Jobs Summit, our meeting focussed on the forecast social impacts of the economic crisis and those actions that will mitigate these impacts. NZCCSS and its member Church leaders support the moves to keep as many New Zealanders as possible in employment, but, we understand that unemployment and underemployment is an inevitable result of the economic crisis. We want to ensure that the well-being and social cohesion of Aotearoa/New Zealand's families and communities allows for a rapid recovery when the recession is behind us.

At our meeting we reflected on the forecasts of potential unemployment rates and on the possible length of the recession. We looked at historical trends and the current situation and recognised how the effects of difficult economic times impact disproportionately on children and young people, on Māori, on low income families and on Pasifika and other immigrant communities. We have developed three responses, one is a message of hope, another is how we can work proactively as Christian agencies and communities, and finally how government can contribute to the support of those most affected by the crisis.

## MESSAGE OF HOPE

The NZCCSS member Church leaders and Christian social services have a message of hope for the communities of Aotearoa/New Zealand. The strength of communities, of families, the spirit of *aroha tētahi ki tētahi* - of looking after each other – will underpin the support needed to carry us through the hard times and prepare us for a better future. This break in the outright culture of consumerism will allow us all to reconsider our values. We believe that together we can create a more sustainable future where wealth is measured by the well being of all of Aotearoa/New Zealand's peoples and most particularly of our children.

### **Together we can...**

- **Look after each other**
- **Support families grow strong and happy children**
- **Grow healthy communities**
- **Promote a society that values people and families more than it values monetary wealth and material possessions...**

## MAXIMISING THE NZCCSS/PARISH RESPONSE

NZCCSS member Church parishes and social service agencies have always responded by working harder and contributing more when confronted by times of hardship. Already NZCCSS has received feedback from its member agency foodbanks of increased generosity from parishes and from parishioners in finding more funds and food donations. There will be a variety of parish level responses as people identify ways in which they can make a contribution to families and communities in need.

At a Christian social service agency level there is a history of using both agency and government resources to respond to communities needs. Through their commitment to their missions of care and compassion Christian social service agencies are able to rally community support, donations and volunteer time to achieve great results on modest budgets. NZCCSS with the support of its member Church leaders is committed to maximising the responses of our parishes and social service agencies by promoting collaboration and through providing support for the development of effective practices.

### **Together we can...**

- **Provide collective leadership to encourage ‘joined up’ Christian social support at local, regional and national levels**
- **Use Christian media and NZCCSS publications to promote practical and workable ways of getting the best results for families hurt by the recession**
- **Meet together at local and regional levels to decide how parishes, Christian social services agencies, businesses and communities can maximise their contribution to serving local needs**

## EFFECTIVE GOVERNMENT RESPONSES

The responses of communities and parishes, of Christian social service agencies and community service groups will not be enough on their own – business, unions, Iwi, the social sector, Churches and Government must work together.

Co-ordinating responses across and between all our organisations means we will need to closely and regularly monitor the impact of the recession.

The number of people who are made redundant is already escalating and the level of unemployment will be high. Many are predicting a long period of recession and a slow recovery. On this basis the social impacts will be significant – the Church leaders and NZCCSS see that equally significant and long-term family support responses are required. This will require keeping people engaged in part-time employment and increasing the level of income for people dependant on core benefits particularly for families with children.

### ***Supporting Families with Children***

As the recession further impacts on New Zealand more families will have only one income and no overtime – or will be forced to live on a benefit. The additional 16 weeks of support from the Re-Start package for families who are forced onto benefits is commendable, but for many will not bridge them into another job. For these families long periods on a benefit will be their reality. The result will be more and more children

living in poverty. Ensuring adequate levels of support for families with children is vital to New Zealand's future wellbeing.

*Recommendations for ongoing action ...*

- Call for a “quarterly recession response forum”, to be convened by the Prime Minister, to closely monitor the impacts of the recession and to include representatives from the business, unions, Iwi, the social sector, Churches and Government. This will increase the ability to address social impacts in coordination with economic and job related impacts.
- Adapt part of the child support In Work Tax Credit component of Working for Families so that it extends to all children from low income families (waged and on benefits)
- Increase the level of income that can be earned through part-time employment by a beneficiary by at least \$40 per week before their benefit is abated (with a stepped process to increase this further for families with children)
- Introduce school funding regimes that ensure children from low income families can access cultural and sporting activities that enhance their educational and social potential
- Increase the number of State Houses and the level of support provided through the Accommodation Supplement

***Supporting Communities***

Strong communities will be our greatest asset in ensuring the families of Aotearoa/New Zealand are not too badly damaged by the impacts of the recession. The social dislocation caused by long periods of unemployment and/or low levels of income can result in a much lower state of physical, mental, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing. The already increasing numbers of people who are accessing support services from community organisations are going to multiply and a wide range of effective service providers and community entrepreneurs will be required to meet these needs.

*Recommendations for ongoing action ...*

- Develop an overarching “Family Support Strategy” that ensures families can access the right support at the right time – including preventative support that stops issues escalating - right through to crisis support and assistance to get back on track if a crisis does occur
- Provide additional funding to effective social service providers to meet the increasing volume of clients that will require support
- Require government funded social service organisations to respond effectively to the needs of Māori, and ensure kaupapa Māori organisations are supported at an appropriate level to respond to their community needs
- Ensure government agencies and community agencies work more closely together across the range of services so that the best, most sustainable and most cost effective results for vulnerable families are achieved

## **WORKING TOGETHER**

The “Together we can...” concept is extremely important. We are facing unprecedented times of challenge and difficulty. It will be through all of Aotearoa/New Zealand pulling together and supporting each other that we will navigate through these difficult times. The member Churches and Christian social services agencies of the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services want to work proactively with the government and with communities. We are eagerly awaiting the opportunity to discuss with government how we may be able to contribute to assisting our national effort during this period of economic crisis.

### **Together we can...**

- **Work together as community, government and Church organisations to provide support for those New Zealanders most affected by the global economic crisis**
- **Grow a stronger community more able to look after one another – *aroha tētahi ki tētahi***