



To: New Zealand Productivity Commission (NZPC)

From: Birthright New Zealand Incorporated

SUBMISSION: Draft Report – More Effective Social Services

1. Introduction

We commend the Productivity Commission for the breadth of issues raised in the report and in particular for the overview of the social services landscape and seeking to understand and highlight underlying causes rather than focus on symptoms.

We are not seeking to provide comprehensive feedback on the report in its entirety but have instead focussed on some particular areas of interest.

Specific comments

In several findings, the report highlights the need to continue to foster collaboration and cross department working models within Government. We consider it is also worth highlighting the need for cross political collaboration for substantive action taken as a result of the Productivity Commission report. This will ensure innovations and improvements are not restricted to political cycles and are given the opportunity to be fully implemented and continuously reviewed.

Chapter 3 highlights new approaches in New Zealand and overseas and the lessons that can be learned from these approaches. There is an underlying assumption that the most gain can be made by innovating with new programmes rather than innovation through investment in existing programmes and capacity. The report does note that innovation is also about “finding better ways of delivering current services...”¹ and there is some further exploration of this issue in Chapter 7 of the report². We suggest that more emphasis needs to be given to how this type of innovation can be built on, encouraged and invested in. This includes the appetite for and tolerance of “failure” and experimentation.

¹ Page 55, Chapter 3, More Effective Social Services – Draft Report.

² Page 147



We agree with the majority of the findings in Chapter 8 and suggest greater investment in NGOs to develop workforce capability in using data and analytics has benefits for all parties whether the funder, organisation delivering services or the client receiving services.

The report highlights the risks in taking a “top down” approach and explores the benefits to be gained from greater client choice and empowerment. Alongside this, we suggest more consideration needs to be given to how community development can foster effective social services with the broader societal benefits to be gained by community based approaches.

We note the Commission’s recommendation to establish an Office for Social Services. Although we support the principle of ensuring any changes have a driver and champion, we consider more thought needs to be given to whether such an establishment is necessary and if so, the best configuration and scoping of this role to ensure “whole of system thinking” as outlined in recommendation 14.2.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on this report and look forward to seeing the final report in August.

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