

Submission to the NZ Productivity Commission's Draft Report on More Effective Social Services June 2015

From:

Inspiring Communities
Tiakina ō Tātou Tamariki
Great Start Taita
Good Cents Porirua



Thank you for the opportunity to offer feedback on your Draft Report.

Firstly we would commend you for the scope and depth of your findings and inquiry. Your report is well written and highlights both a broad range of longstanding systemic issues and potential pathways forward for further consideration and debate. There are no easy answers or quick fixes.

We note the limits of the Commission's inquiry which requires you to focus on institutional arrangements and contracting mechanisms related to state funded social services. A narrow 'services' framing, where "services need needs" to deliver on, can in fact to be debilitating to improving outcomes for New Zealanders. While 'high needs' people and families may be supported through this approach, the broader wellbeing needs of communities (for example: social connectedness, confidence, trust and prevention/early intervention approaches) are often excluded from planning and investment frameworks as a result.

"There are two paths to addressing community needs, one is through service delivery and the other is through community building. We've had more service delivery and less community building. This crisis creates the opportunity to change that to show people they have the resources and power to make change happen in their local areas."

Jim Diers, Seattle Neighbourhoods Expert, in Disrupting the Relationship between Citizens and the State

We reassert that purchasing/commissioning 'services' are only part of the change mix required to improve the wellbeing of all New Zealanders.

We agree that the whole 'social services' system (central and local government, service providers, iwi/Maori, academics, consumers, communities) must continue to be involved in an ongoing dialogue to collectively co-design and trial different approaches to enhance New Zealand's social wellbeing. To quote Canadian social complexity specialist Mark Cabaj:

"We must learn, not spend our way out of this. There will be failures along the way – we need to make them smart failures, always asking ourselves, what did we learn? In the times ahead we

need to be courageous not brave – brave is about having no fear, being courageous is about acknowledging the fear and going ahead anyway.”

We note that key elements of community-led development principles and approaches are referenced in many parts of your report and would strongly support inclusion of the following in your recommended ‘go forward’ to government:

- **Recognition of place-based approaches**, bottom up (local) collaborative planning and greater ability for local places and communities to ‘self determine’ structures, processes and approaches that will work best for them, including:
 - Adoption of ‘minimum specs’ rather than prescriptive rules/top down control to guide establishment and growth of local initiatives/arrangements. More enabling frameworks in order for local places to be innovative, responsive and resourceful.
 - Government as partner/participant not driver/controller /specifier

- **Better enabling and supporting a culture of innovation, learning and sharing**
 - Equally valuing practice-based evidence and evidence based practice
 - Investing in developmental evaluation approaches
 - Monitoring performance and effectiveness through a broad range of indicators.
 - Better access to local level data sets
 - More structured training and development opportunities to share emerging practice and build new skills and knowledge

- **Proactively engaging and involving social service users and communities in service design, review and future planning.** A key emerging international trend is the effectiveness of local, high participation initiatives that drive positive change, this means:
 - Valuing communities as experts
 - Intentionally building relationships, trust, and confidence within communities
 - Investing in processes, people and initiatives that unleash community capacity to resolve their own issues, thus reducing negative outcomes and expensive downstream costs to government.
 - Incorporating community building principles into service delivery and using processes that enable participation

We wish the Commission well in preparing its final report and welcome further opportunities to participate in next steps dialogue and planning.

Kind regards



David Hanna

National Manager, Inspiring Communities

On behalf of the CLD Learning Partners Group