

A FAIR CHANCE FOR ALL – BREAKING THE CYCLE OF PERSISTENT DISADVANTAGE:
SUBMISSION RESPONSE TO INTERIM REPORT

“A government is judged by how well it looks after its most vulnerable people.” (*Stabroeknews.com* (2016)).

“How a society treats its most vulnerable is always the measure of its humanity.” (*Statement by Ambassador M Rycroft of the UK Mission to the UN, 2015*).

“Welfare reform is fundamentally about opportunity and life change...(*Centre for Social Justice, UK, 2014*) ... cutting the cost of social failure by transforming the life chances and outcomes of those on benefits...”

Introduction

My submission responds to the government’s request for public feedback and input into the Productivity Commission’s Interim Report on Breaking the Cycle of Persistent Disadvantage.

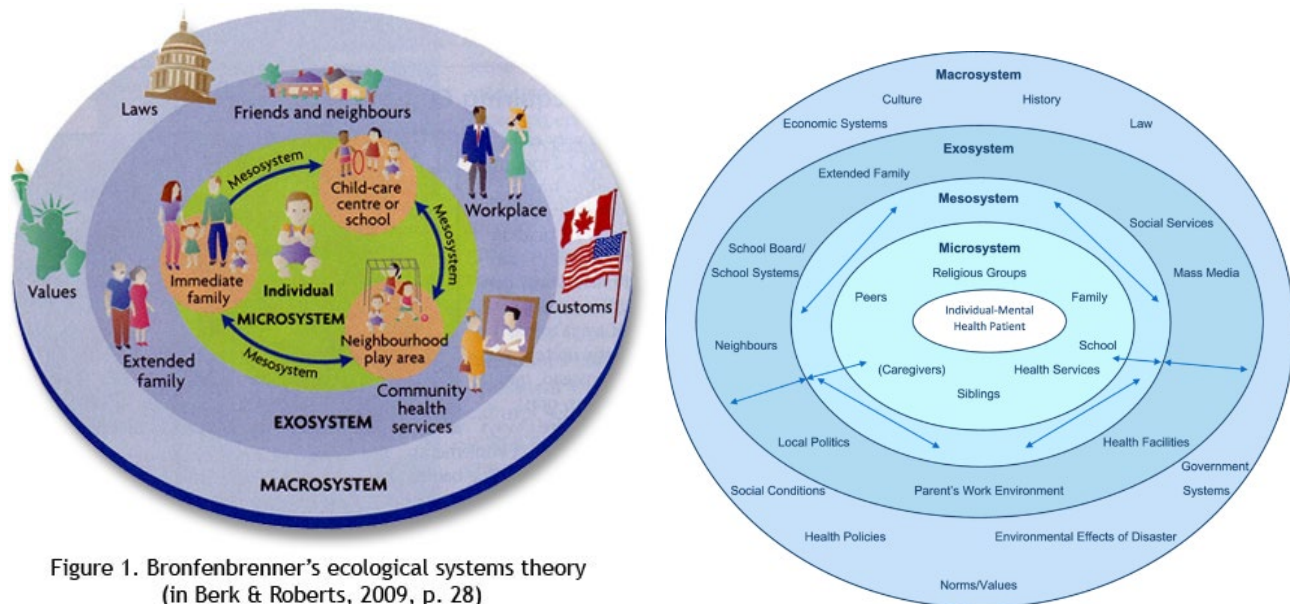
It’s encouraging that Productivity Commission, since their inception, continue to monitor and report on findings about social change in New Zealand towards ‘*ensuring equitable experiences and outcomes for New Zealanders*’. It seems that governments are taking their role seriously by receiving and sometimes acting on findings of the public’s submissions and feedback about major topical issues that affect New Zealanders e.g. immigration settings. The report says ‘*the Commission aims to lift New Zealand’s productivity and, as a result, lift the wellbeing of New Zealanders*’, so I’m glad they’re asking public for feedback on the important issue of persistent disadvantage, rooted in inequality.

It seems that governments have realised, that if they’re serious about improving productivity in this country, they need to tap into the views of disadvantaged groups (e.g. the disabled) to find out what barriers hold them back from thriving and feeling socially included. It’s timely now, in the Covid 19 recovery phase, for governments to ‘even out messy playing fields’ in certain areas for disadvantaged groups so they can improve peoples’ standard of living, wellbeing, resilience and social mobility aspirations. There’s increasing recognition that participation and inclusion assists wellbeing and resilience. There are still many sectors of New Zealand population who don’t enjoy the benefits that the majority take for granted.

CONTENTS OF THE INTERIM REPORT

What persistent disadvantage looks like

As a counsellor working within non-profits and NGOs, social justice issues feature prominently in my client base who include migrants, disabled, students, single parents, low-income earners, pensioners, mental health consumers and Maori/Pacific. I see the effects that oppression or suppression by the 'macrosystem' has on them. A common theme they talk about is of feeling marginalised due to factors outside their control, by society and policy-makers in general. The report supported that the above communities are most affected by persistent disadvantage.



A single working parent for many years, my working life was cut short due to disability, necessitating me becoming underemployed and doing volunteer work to further my career post-graduation. Disability's affected my standard of living, quality of life, wellbeing, resilience to other stresses and ability to work. Now I experience persistent disadvantage in all three domains. As a baby-boomer, it was a huge transition from growing up in a middle-class New Zealand family, with middle-class values, expectations, norms and a strong work ethic, to being disabled, on a benefit. Disability is a double-whammy, as I'm 'educated' and have a degree but now earn 75% less than my earning potential, so am relegated by society to the 'lower classes'. Therefore I'm well familiar with clients' concerns about social exclusion, feeling marginalised and unable to participate, prosper and fulfil their social mobility aspirations as much as they'd envisaged and hoped, due to life events (e.g. redundancy), societal barriers, discrimination and unequal power arrangements.

I can relate to the report's acknowledgement of system barriers and solutions e.g. the iceberg model and the systems shift/approach; siloism, government fragmentation, short-termism, the status-quo bias, prejudice and power imbalance when accessing services.

The drivers of persistent disadvantage

It's not surprising that '*one-in-five New Zealanders experience persistent disadvantage*' where they don't thrive or prosper due to the long term inequality and societal barriers of injustice, power imbalance, marginalisation, social exclusion, social injustice, discrimination, inequality, negative stereotypes, stigma, oppression, suppression, government overreach, bureaucracy, institutional racism, colonisation, white privilege, urbanisation, ageism, prejudice.

What governments could do better

Inequality: Governments have a part to play

Sociologists including McLennan (*McLennan, Ryan & Spoonley: Exploring Society. Sociology for New Zealand Students, 2002*) maintain that inequality is 'the most serious problem facing world society'. Even though generally, western democracies fare better economically, there still remains in most of those countries pockets of populations who are disadvantaged and struggle with inequality in their daily lives. This results in a flow-on effect to governments and economies in increased healthcare costs as many don't receive the early help they need. Thus governments enabling and creating a fairer society by 'equalling up messy playing fields' in many areas (e.g. affordable and universal healthcare and housing etc), is imperative to disadvantaged citizens of their country in order that social cohesion doesn't irretrievably break down and result in civil conflict and demonstrations that third-world countries experience.

Whilst New Zealand has a reasonably high level of social cohesion being a democracy and first-world country, there are regular protests and petitions outside Parliament, from groups of aggrieved citizens, about impingements, injustices and inequality regarding their basic rights. But it's the tip of the iceberg, as every day, thousands of New Zealanders face a multitude of systemic barriers, prejudice and discrimination deriving from inequality. It doesn't make sense in this day and age, that the New Zealand government often overlooks, dismisses and is non-inclusive of marginalised populations in their decision-making. Many of the social ills we observe today e.g. homelessness, are the direct result of colonisation or inequality still plaguing countries today.

What the inquiry should focus on

The worsening outlook for older women

In 2020 leading Australian feminist and author Jane Caro (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jane_Caro) told TVNZ1 about the history of feminism worldwide and in Australia and New Zealand. She cautioned that older women fare less well due to being the generation of mothers who in their 40's and 50's looked after both ageing parents and their own children. Accordingly they neglected their own finances and didn't top up superannuation schemes. Currently 31% of Australian homeless women are in this older age group. She recommended governments ensure there are plenty of affordable nursing homes and service jobs which RTW (return-to-the-workforce) mothers can do so they can continue or resume working through those caregiving years and contribute to superannuation for their retirement. Older, single women face issues like housing 'security of tenure' and reduced work hours/part-time work because of declining health, slashing their earning potential drastically. Due to the fragmentation of society and the nuclear family, there are now many more single older women, who without an earning partner are potentially worse off financially.

Inequality in the job market

Recently the CEO of Workbridge (New Zealand's largest disability employment agency) said on a TVNZ1 interview, that the thing stopping disabled getting jobs is peoples' attitudes and assumptions. It's not that disabled don't want to work, it's that employers are reluctant to take them on, perhaps for OSH reasons. This I've found in my own case – that as soon as you put 'hearing impaired' on your job application form, you never hear back from prospective employers. If I'm lucky enough to get a job interview, I've had instances where as soon as I've said I'm hearing-impaired, 'the walls come up', and the interview is terminated; interviewers physically stand up to signal it's time to finish the interview, and I'm then shown the door. Statistics show that the likelihood of disabled scoring a job is many times lower than the national average.

Once in the workplace however, inequality persists. Research shows that workplace bullying and discrimination based on disability is endemic towards disabled workers. One example was a hearing-impaired person having to contact their union representative to attend a manager's meeting with them, in order to obtain a satisfactory outcome; after a supervisor bullied them because of their disability.

There needs to be a cultural shift in society that changes the social discourses and narratives around disabled workers and older workers. Recently TVNZ1 featured an interview with *Partners in Change.co.nz*

who advocate for older workers. This organisation dispelled some negative stereotypes around older-age workers by reinforcing the view that what older workers may lack in technological skills, they make up by having twenty years or more organisational history and work experience about the industry/company they work in than the younger worker does.

Dispelling myths, stigma, prejudice and stereotypes: Older people, beneficiaries and single mothers

Contrary to stereotypes of unemployed being lazy, a lot of people in the baby boomers age group are asset rich but cash poor. They've saved in their working lives, paid off a mortgage for 'the family home', contributed to Kiwisaver, but are far from comfortable in their day to day living costs. Due to health or disability reasons, they're high users of the health system. Many envisaged working through retirement, but found themselves locked out of the job market due to life events (e.g. redundancy), health or disability issues.

After over a decade in Australia, I noticed when I returned to New Zealand the 1990s, that compared to Australia 'solo mothers' here were treated with prejudice and stigma by social welfare agencies and society. I felt like I'd returned to a timewarp – a less progressive, less optimistic, less free, more backward country than Australia. Australia are wealthier, have huge economies of scale and are able to distribute wealth further. They have a better standard of living, lower cost of living so 'single mothers' there enjoyed a fairer social status than 'solo mothers' here. Australian single mothers were treated on a par with other welfare recipients and pensioners in receiving universally discounted services and benefits like cheaper public transport etc. There was no discrimination between these groups and the rest of Australian society. New Zealand is a smaller, more expensive and colder country. It seemed almost a rite of passage here that 'solo mothers' endured freezing rental flats in winter and had to spend excessive amounts of money on clothing and heating, compared to Australia. There was more stigma and prejudice here against single mothers, than I'd experienced in Australia and this is unfair when you're bringing up the next generation and wanting to give them good chances in life.

INEQUALITY INTERNATIONALLY

'The Austerity' approach by governments

Recently we witnessed a graphic example of the UK's Conservative Party introducing an 'austerity' approach towards their citizens in the form of 'tax cuts' for high-earners, i.e. only the rich. Such a move was punitive, unfair and discriminatory towards low and middle income-earners and ill-timed in these tough economic times of housing, energy and cost-of-living crises. The 'austere', extremely 'right wing' approach of that Prime Minister hadn't been seen in the UK since Thatcherism of the 1980s. Naturally, being a democracy, the UK public, Bank of England, and international monetary markets, reacted swiftly to these so-called 'bold moves' by the Prime Minister resulting in the UK dollar plunging in value drastically within a week. This inevitably resulted in that newly elected Prime Minister resigning due to the government's lack of confidence in her and public outcry at her incompetence and over-ambitiousness implementing the tax policy.

"The Impact of Austerity", (Al Jazeera, Nov 2022), noted that historically when the UK imposed an 'austerity approach' it resulted in cuts in benefits, low incomes (resulting in low nutrition, low health and higher mortality rates).' The 'austerity' approach doesn't enhance or improve equality nationally or worldwide.

World leaders' meetings, conferences and summits

It was glaringly apparent on a global scale once Covid 19 subsided, that suddenly all the countries' leaders rushed overseas to meet each other face to face. This included the New Zealand Prime Minister attending NATO, the UN conference and the Pacific Islands Forum, along with other international delegates and world leaders. *Al Jazeera (10/22)* said in most cases it had been three years since world leaders had met in person, to the detriment of society, as a lot of water had passed under the bridge geo-politically and economically since 2019. These pressing, complex worldwide concerns (climate change, the cost of living, energy crises against the backdrop of the Ukraine war), had all progressed alarmingly in the intervening three years and had worsened inequality. Thankfully the contemporary 'world order' which existed since WWII of dialogue, diplomacy and cooperation has resumed this year between some world leaders. We can only hope their efforts aren't too late and that commonsense and a will to end conflict between competing nations prevails so they can resume the business of addressing inequality issues, common to all nations.

INEQUALITY - THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

I don't believe it's in the interests of the New Zealand public, communities or population, that New Zealand governments take an 'austerity' mindset once they're elected to power. Fortunately we have a two-party system which provides a good point of difference politically in New Zealand. Fortunately the Labour Party (steeped in egalitarian and fairness values), are careful to avoid such unpopular moves as 'austerity' towards an already large and socio-economically disadvantaged sector of the population. Hopefully right-wing economic policies don't undo all the good work Labour has done in raising benefits and reducing doctors' fees to improve outcomes for low-income earners. Other parties' high-handed tactics would cause greater divisiveness in New Zealand, than we've already witnessed since Covid. Right-wing 'slash and burn' approaches wouldn't go down well with the public, who are still in the recovery phase of Covid 19 and would be tantamount to punishing those lower down the foodchain who would, as they always have, bear the brunt of tough economic reforms and continue to be left behind.

Politics affects inequality – Neoliberalism of the 1980s

New Zealand sociologists lament the utopian, egalitarian society of the 1950s and '60s here where everyone could afford to buy a quarter-acre section large enough to build a family home on. But worldwide, since the 20th Century, societal factors like globalisation, capitalism, nationalism (Trumpism), fragmentation, stratification of society and neoliberalism have eroded society to the extent that many countries' citizens feel increasingly alienated from government decision-making and social cohesion is stressed.

In 2021 former National politician Jim Bolger, when asked to reflect on his time as Prime Minister during the government's policy shift to a 'free market economy', told TVNZ1 he was now very concerned about

inequality. He mentioned a book on 'rampant capitalism', urging National to 'articulate vision' instead of criticizing the current government and instead offer alternatives of what they'd do differently. He said National needed to 'reimagine capitalism' to avoid inequality causing division as 'free market capitalism was destroying the planet and destabilizing society' (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Bolger, 10/22).

Bolger warned that governments needed to be 'inclusive or sew seeds of rebellion' if inequality isn't addressed and that National's new leader needed to have an 'understanding of poverty'. Sadly, I don't think that's the case. The current National Party members reek of capitalism, white privilege, private schools and upper class values and mores. They wouldn't know or give the time of day to a beneficiary if they fell over one in the street.

Bolger's sentiments were echoed in prominent researcher, social commentator and author Max Rashbrooke's new book *Too Much Money* (2021), (<https://www.bwb.co.nz/books/too-much-money/>). Rashbrooke said the so-called egalitarian society no longer exists as the top one percent of earners own a quarter of the country and lead increasingly segregated lives from the rest of us. He said this affects social cohesion and politics because how can you help or relate to people from other socio-demographic groups if you don't experience disadvantage or see it in person, for example the disparity between the importance of jobs on minimum wage e.g. caregivers working in the aged care system who support our most vulnerable people, compared to wasteful jobs of the wealthy, like real estate, which contribute very little money back to society.

The gap between rich and poor

His sentiments were echoed in the following link of a cartoon by Radio NZ, published in 2015, on inequality:



The Pencilsword: Inequality Tower (2015) (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/the-wireless/372969/the-pencilsword-inequality-tower>), <https://thespinoff.co.nz/society/31-07-2018/the-side-eye-inequality-tower-2018>

In 2013, TV3's Inside New Zealand televised award-winning journalist and social commentator Bryan Bruce's documentary *Mind the Gap (Inside New Zealand – a Special Report on Inequality in New Zealand (2013), Red Sky Film & Television Limited*, <https://www.facebook.com/www.redsky.tv> www.redsky.tv), <https://nzptv.org.nz/mind-the-gap/>.

Bruce discussed the effects of neoliberalist economic policies on New Zealand during the 1980s. Neoliberalism caused drastic changes to the New Zealand economy, to the detriment of our society and exacerbated social ills that still plague us today e.g. homelessness and the increasing gap between rich and poor. He said the so called 'trickle down effect' that politicians had predicted would happen with the 'free market economy', where the rich get rich and then contribute capital to the poor, didn't happen. He'd visited and interviewed leading world economists and concluded that 'our economy had failed to deliver the greatest good to the greatest number of people but that there were solutions' for example 'social businesses' which 'put people ahead of profits', common in some third-world countries like Bangladesh.

When I returned from overseas over a decade after these momentous 1980s reforms, it was glaringly obvious the detrimental effects that neoliberalist policies had had on our country. Poverty was much more apparent in groups like single parents, unemployed, low-skilled workers and the elderly. There was much more social stratification and tension between classes of people e.g. unemployed and 'the working poor', renters and landlords or capitalists and socialists. New Zealand was no longer the utopian 'egalitarian society' I'd grown up with and left behind twelve years beforehand. The gap between rich and poor was very evident.

INTERIM REPORT FINDINGS

'Progress is being made - but needs to be faster, deeper and more joined-up'

The report noted that common findings of the reviews included *'a lack of coordination and cooperation across sectors, such as health'*. It recommended improvements in the areas of *'public accountability settings, monitoring and evaluation'*. I agree and have experienced the following factors:

'Siloism' and *'government fragmentation'* are observed as many workers beavering away behind their computers within government and social service agencies, attending Zoom meetings with one another to achieve an agreed united vision or goal, but not regularly networking in person or sharing the results of their findings with other stakeholders in the same industry, e.g. the burgeoning social service agency sector. The result is that important policy changes often don't occur.

'Downstream' from the above industries, examples of the *'silo effect'* include when, as a disabled person, after submitting an email to Whaikaha, less than a month later, a similar theme of issues arose in media, and I found myself forwarding that same email (with minor edits) onto another government department or Minister, where issues overlapped and were similar. Or I'd receive an emailed newsletter from a social service agency inviting disabled to forward their views on 'built housing modifications for disabled' to a university research team. So I found myself, again, doing a similar exercise in forwarding contents of the same email I'd sent to a government department two months ago, with minor edits, to this university for their research (which presumably inputs into some government department somewhere to affect policy change).

'Siloism' results in there being too many social sector agencies *'reinventing the wheel'*, overlapping services by providing similar functions. This is confusing for disabled consumers/end-users of the service as to which agency to approach re queries or support/advocacy. Hopefully with the advent of Whaikaha, accessibility issues might be streamlined and government funding could go to fewer, larger, and proven efficient, effective agencies. So the report's recommendation of constant, regular monitoring, evaluation and KPI reporting back (to Whaikaha re disability) is crucial to improve accountability and ensure disability agencies are getting results for their clients/end-users and that government funding is being used in the right way, not spent on exorbitant consultancy or management fees.

'Short-termism' is what the general public feel when social 'issues of the day' e.g. 'homelessness' get momentarily and enthusiastically tackled on multiple fronts by government and social service agencies, then once reports are compiled, they *'disappear into a black hole'* and nothing much changes. I agree with the report's finding that *'status quo bias'* is at play here. It's not surprising that the public are sometimes sceptical of *'yet another government report'*. For example my university body of work on 'housing modifications for disabled' seemed to mirror what the government was currently *'doing over there'* in another part of Wellington; i.e. Parliament, which was reassuring and motivating, but who knows whether in these post-Covid, post-Zoom days these people actually meet in person and act on recommendations outlined by the public's feedback. Sometimes it feels like you're one of the few people working at the coalface submitting ideas *'to the politicians'* who make decisions that affect us, but the ideas disappear into a *'black hole'* or *'university filing cabinet'* and no change comes of it re public policy at all at Parliament, which physically is only a fifteen-minute walk across town from the university! You have to wonder whether these two entities actually meet in person to discuss their findings and produce joint recommendations for meaningful policy change. There seems to be a vacuum between public input to government and output from government; a vortex where issues swirl around for a few months, then mysteriously disappear.

I really like and resonate with the *'iceberg model'* in the report as it mirrors the CBT core values pyramid model that I use in counselling with CBT clients, whereby core beliefs of a client are revealed. The subconscious is where long-held assumptions, biases, stereotypes and generalisations were formed, usually in childhood through parental influences.

I sometimes feel that I experience *'prejudice, discrimination and power imbalances'* within the health system and some government departments when accessing their services as a disabled and older citizen.

'Are we on the right track?'

'System shifts: Re-think overall system settings to prioritise equity, wellbeing and social inclusion'

I relate to the government's *'systems shift/approach'* solution to public accountability and management issues, because it acknowledges that fixing just one area/sector e.g. housing, doesn't address the drivers and complexities of persistent disadvantage. Similarly, as counsellors we use Systems Theory in couples counselling as there are themes and patterns that couples use repeatedly in communicating with each other. Systems Theory examines *the system of the couple themselves* i.e. how they relate to each other and deal with conflict – a broader, more holistic approach than trying to fix individual areas alone because people are more complex than the sum of their parts. Counsellors look at the 'process, not content' of peoples' communication style. Similar to what the *'iceberg model'* illustrates, systemic issues can be deep-rooted in childhood and family norms. So I agree, that a systemic approach to fixing persistent disadvantage is more comprehensive than just sector-wide approaches.

'The wellbeing approach'

The report recommended prioritising a wellbeing approach to public management and accountability issues. As a counsellor, we're at the coalface of mental health and wellness issues, so this is a paradigm shift that would totally transform government's service delivery.

The Treaty of Waitangi

The Productivity Commission incorporates Treaty of Waitangi principles and these must continue to guide government. In the recent *What makes a good life?* publication (*Office of the Children's Commissioner & Oranga Tamariki, 2019*), Maori youth lamented the lack of *Pakeha* society's knowledge about colonisation and its marginalising effects on Maori.

Three things the government could do right now to enhance equality and make a difference in socio-economically disadvantaged peoples' lives include:

Discounted public transport fares

The above recent government initiative was a game-changer to reducing inequality for socio-economically disadvantaged groups. It enabled people like myself to afford to purchase a Metlink 10-trip train ticket (discounted from the normal \$75 cost), into Wellington to attend multiple job interviews. Prior to this, I couldn't afford a single return train fare of \$20 for a one-off job interview as I live 30km outside of Wellington. This initiative improved my quality of life, and I am now not dependent upon 'saving up' for train fares and scheduling job interviews two weeks in advance, in order to save the train fare money before the interview. That often resulted in me missing out on the job because quicker candidates got an earlier interview. The initiative enables low-income earners to go for job interviews continually, possibly secure a job and improve their quality of life and income, lifting them out of the poverty trap and welfare dependency. It has positive flow-on effects to larger groups than just working commuters, as they can participate in society and the job market, where once they were excluded. It's timely for such a move during the recovery phase, while people are trying to get their lives back after Covid 19. This one move alone has removed cost barriers to socio-economically disadvantaged communities and has a direct effect by enabling working-age disabled and unemployed to afford transport, get a job and contribute to the economy and society, raising their wellbeing and improving their financial outcomes.

In my report to Whaikaha, I recommended that the government continue to provide discounted public transport fares for disadvantaged communities (CSC-holders, students, pensioners, disabled) on an ongoing, permanent basis. It creates a freer, more mobile society where everyone can participate.

Lessons from Covid inequities

Glaring inequities surfaced worldwide e.g. 'vaccine inequity' whereby rich, first-world countries accumulated and stockpiled Covid 19 vaccines, not sharing them with smaller, third-world countries.

Covid highlighted via the media to the New Zealand public and government, the inequities which existed in New Zealand society prior to Covid, but which were exacerbated by it.

'Vaccine hesitancy' occurred in demographically deprived communities like Porirua which achieved a much lower rate of vaccination than richer areas like the North Shore of Auckland. Maori vaccination rates were 20% less than the rest of the country. An epidemiologist said the same demographics as the deprivation index of regions occurred – because people living in isolated rural areas couldn't afford to drive to a vaccination clinic.

Maori health providers complained about inequities in the government's vaccine rollout – that it wasn't designed or consulted with by Maori, ignored socially deprived rural areas and didn't consider Treaty principles. They said a 'one size fits all' approach to the rollout was discriminatory and institutional racism to exclude Maori health providers from decision-making at the outset of the pandemic response.

Bernard Hickey, journalist and economic commentator's website thespinoff.co.nz highlights the increase in inequality in New Zealand since Covid. Examples include the government pumping up monetary assistance for businesses rather than welfare for the poor, who would put it straight back into the economy rather than banking it. He said the 1990s punished low income earners and since Covid the government's economic response is punishing them again.

In a report to Whaikaha I, and others, recommended that the government push ahead with developing a future 'pandemic response and infectious diseases pathway' in order that minority groups and the population in general, don't have to suffer the same mistakes that were made in the last pandemic response. Epidemiologists agree that this exercise needs to be done soon while learnings, mistakes and lessons are fresh in peoples' minds.

Raising main benefits

Since they've been in power the Labour government has progressively raised main benefits to a reasonable level. WEAG however recommend that main benefits increase to a liveable amount so that beneficiaries don't continue to live below the poverty line. Studies show that beneficiaries contribute to the economy by 'spending more' once they have more disposable income from benefit increases, so WEAG's rationale makes sense.

During their first term in office, the Labour government's Ministry of Social Development increased the abatement threshold for Jobseekers from \$80 to \$150 per week. This freeing move allowed beneficiaries to earn more from part time work without the sanctions of reduced benefits. With greater disposable income, beneficiaries were motivated and incentivised to find work and as they could afford transport fares to the new job. On an income below the poverty line every dollar counts. Before this beneficiaries weren't incentivised to leave the house for job interviews, unless it was within walking distance of home (rare), due to costs of public or private transport/travel. Hopefully a different government doesn't reverse these gains and prevent people from fulfilling their potential. To do this would be tantamount to exclusionary practices by a government in forcing people back into poverty and welfare dependency.

As a beneficiary, I can tell you that the current low benefit rates regime keeps beneficiaries poor and holds them back from achieving their potential and a better standard of living. It exacerbates their already stressful financial situation, increases societal barriers, hardship and social exclusion, statistically putting them at risk of mental illnesses like depression.

Suggested further reading and references:

How to get closer together: Impacts of income inequality and policy responses P Barber - *Policy Quarterly*, 2011 - ojs.victoria.ac.nz

Abstract Professors Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett in *The Spirit Level* (2010) have documented the relationship between income inequality and health and social dysfunction across 25 developed countries including New Zealand, and summarised their findings in their Index of Health and Social Problems (IHSP). The results of this work show that New Zealand is performing poorly in comparison to countries with lower levels of income inequality. Their research has prompted debate in New Zealand (see *Policy Quarterly* issues ... Barber, P. (2011). *How to get closer together: Impacts of income inequality and policy responses*. *Policy Quarterly*, 7(4).

Pickett, K., & Wilkinson, R. (2010). *The spirit level: Why equality is better for everyone*. Penguin UK. www.equalitytrust.org.uk

Wilkinson, R. G., & Pickett, K. (2009). *The spirit level: Why more equal societies almost always do better* (Vol. 6). London: Allen Lane. <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals>

[www.files.ethz.ch › isn › 105515](http://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/105515) *Why Democracy is Central to Prosperity and Peace - ETH Z*

among well-off countries, democracies do far better than other governance systems at generating prosperity and stability over extended periods. Establishing a world of prosperous democracies is

NZ'S Neoliberal drift: Jacobinmag.com In NZ neoliberal reforms have widened inequality and undermined the country's self image of an egalitarian paradise. <https://jacobin.com/>
"A country once proud of its egalitarianism now has higher income inequality than much of the developed world. A country once known for its prosperity now suffers with shameful levels of poverty. A country that markets itself as "clean and green" now must face the reality of its environmental degradation."
#NZpolitics #NZLabour #NZGreens #Maoriparty #NZFrist#endneoliberalism #Jacobin #BryanBruce

LECTURE Poverty and inequality Anthony Giddens at the London School of Economics _____

Culture Wars 

Mark Tyson

Anthony Giddens is a world-renowned social theorist and proponent of Third Way politics, as well as being director of the LSE. He began his lecture by stressing the need for and the importance of social justice. Indeed, legitimate redistribution is, he argues, imperative. Without legitimate redistribution Giddens believes that illegitimate redistribution will flourish, presumably by way of crime, a black economy and other such means. For Giddens the issue of inequality is of fundamental importance today. He believes this to be the issue that most clearly separates the political left from the right.

Giddens makes it clear that when he talks about equality he does not mean formal equality in the liberal sense, but substantive equality. He argues strongly for wealth redistribution; the primary means of achieving this being, he believes, through the tax system. Using a relative rather than an absolute definition of poverty, Giddens argued that poverty and inequality are inextricably linked. So along with measures to reduce inequality, anti-poverty measures are also required. This is vital to prevent those at the bottom from being cut adrift and 'locked out' from mainstream society. Along with this conventionally understood form of 'social exclusion', Giddens is also concerned about exclusion at the top, and the possible growth of an elite class standing separate from the rest of society.

Giddens noted the tension between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome...Giddens' approach involves taxation to redistribute wealth and maintain public services. But as he himself noted, it is often the middle class, not the wealthy, who find themselves at the sharp end of tax increases...

Siegle, J. T., Weinstein, M. M., & Halperin, M. H. (2004). *Why democracies excel*. *Foreign Aff.*, 83, 57. _____

Culture Wars 

'Thriving or Not? (anonymous disabled submitter)

B.Couns.'

[END]