

New Zealand Productivity Commission
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13 October 2022

Tēnā koe,

Please find attached a submission on behalf of the Institute of Community Psychologists Aotearoa (IComPA) on the Productivity Commission's Report, *A fair chance for all: breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage*.

We are more than happy to speak further with the Commission if required.

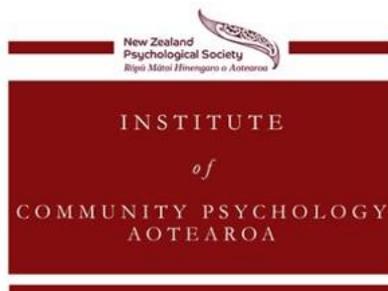
Ngā mihi

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About us

The Institute of Community Psychology Aotearoa (IComPA) is an Institute of the New Zealand Psychological Society (NZPS). You can find us via www.psychology.org.nz IComPA has in the region of 30 paid members and a wider subscribership of around 250.

IComPA's mission is to promote the application of psychology and related knowledge to enhancing social and cultural justice within Aotearoa New Zealand.

We aim to promote developments within the profession and discipline of psychology that will enhance the status of Māori as tangata whenua; that will enhance the ability of ethnic and cultural communities to become self-determining in a manner consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi; promote the use of psychology and social science in the pursuit of social justice for individuals, groups and communities; promote high standards of competency and safe practice among practitioners of community psychology through (a) advising on training in community psychology (b) continuing education, workforce development and networking; promote knowledge of the discipline of community psychology; and to undertake activities consistent with the values and principles of community psychology. Our core values and principles are consistent with those of the Code of Ethics for Psychologists Working in Aotearoa New Zealand (2002).

Our submission: Summary

IComPA is highly supportive of the interim findings in the *A fair chance for all* report. We congratulate the Productivity Commission for such an excellent, well thought through, and carefully considered approach to persistent disadvantage. In particular, we appreciate the systems level thinking, the move to a 'whole of society' approach, and the ways in which the report collects and collates the wide-ranging experiences of persistent disadvantage into a clear and succinct report. Please pass on our support to the team who created this report – the community psychologists who read and reviewed the report for our submission were highly enthusiastic and glowing in their response (which is quite rare!).

Submission detail

Concepts used to guide the inquiry (Chapter 2)

We have built off the work of He Ara Waiora (a tikanga Māori wellbeing framework), the Treasury's Living Standards Framework and the Pacific Wellbeing Strategy for thinking about wellbeing. Do you see any gaps in how we are thinking about wellbeing and persistent disadvantage? What are these gaps?

We commend the Productivity Commission for their focus on thriving throughout the report. We did not perceive there to be any obvious gaps in the thinking and frameworks utilised. In particular, we appreciated the focus on creating an environment for people and communities to thrive in, rather than a focus on 'building resilience' which too often overlooks/ignores the wider disabling and destructive systems within which people must live.

Measuring disadvantage (Chapter 3)

We measure disadvantage across three domains:

- *Left out (exclusion or lacking identity, belonging and connection)*
- *Doing without (deprivation/material hardship or lacking aspiration and capability)*
- *Income poor (income poverty or lacking the ability to grow prosperity)*

Where disadvantage in one or more of those domains is ongoing, for two years or more, we define that as “persistent” disadvantage. Is there any aspect of disadvantage or persistent disadvantage that has not been captured by our definitions and proposed measurement?

We commend the Productivity Commission for their careful thought and consideration given to measuring disadvantage. We value that the definition moves beyond income poverty into consideration of wider areas of disadvantage. We particularly appreciate that this definition moves beyond the typical approach of listing disadvantaged groups into a wider consideration of the underlying drivers of disadvantage.

System barriers (Chapter 5)

The four barriers we identify are part of the reason why previous attempts to address inequalities or realise wellbeing for all have not been fully realised (see finding F5.6 in the interim report). These barriers are:

- *Power imbalances*
- *Discrimination and the ongoing impact of colonisation*
- *Siloed and fragmented government*
- *Short-termism and status quo bias*

Do the barriers we have identified match your experience? What would you add or remove?

We agree with the barriers identified in the interim report. We particularly agree with the need to move to a long-term approach that goes beyond government election cycles and which takes a whole of society approach.

System shifts (Chapter 6)

Our recommendations are based around the notion of systems change. We are proposing four system shifts to achieve greater and faster impact on breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage.

- *Re-think our macro-level system settings to better prioritise equity, wellbeing and social inclusion.*
- *Re-focus public accountability settings to activate a wellbeing approach.*
- *Broaden and embed a wellbeing approach across policymaking and funding frameworks.*
- *Enable system learning through monitoring and evaluation.*

What do you think needs to be done to support these shifts and activate change? Is there anything missing?

The report itself is quite high level. Moving this into the next steps/steps to achieve the reports aims will take a great deal of work. For this to happen effectively, we think the following three things need to occur:

- (a) Whole of government commitment across all parties to support and institute the report’s recommendations. This includes clear milestones/goals for each of the government institutions and clear consequences/accountability mechanisms. We are aware that, despite many reports in health (for example) change has been slow due to factors such as

institutional inertia, inability for parties to agree on what must be done, and lack of accountability for inaction.

- (b) A whole of society shift away from individual blame to creating a society that creates opportunities for all to thrive
- (c) An ongoing commitment to grass-roots groups and to funding grass-roots activities that intentionally create opportunities for thriving

We are very aware that there have been many reports in the area of inequity, poverty, health, etc. These reports have not resulted in effective, ongoing, consistent, or meaningful change. There needs to be a mechanism for holding institutions, groups, and organisations to account for their successes and/or failures to achieve recommendations in this area.