

## **SUBMISSION on A FAIR CHANCE FOR ALL interim report**

### **Support for the underlying premises for the report .....**

I support your underlying assertion that institutional racism, colonisation and power inequalities are important underlying drivers of inequity.

I also appreciate the importance of the public service learning to work differently particularly with deprived communities, and most especially engaging with whanau whose world view and cultural norms are not well reflected currently. I can see that co-designing approaches, trusting the expertise of communities, partnering and devolution are important and need development. There are promising efforts in these spheres in the public service which could be accelerated.

### **.....but disappointment in the Commission's value-add in this report**

I expect more of the Productivity Commission. The Commission so often adds immeasurable value, producing a compelling evidence-based analysis with workable innovative solutions which capture headlines and speak to decision-makers. The Commission usually produces a strong rationale for its findings; convincing, practical, innovative, implementable paths forward.

It is very well known that cross sector working matters, that long term thinking does not happen enough, and that evaluation and learning needs to be more embedded. You are not saying anything that has not already been widely said, studied and discussed.

I would like to suggest five things for you to build on in your final report:

### **Include the political economy in your systems analysis.**

There is a very strong interface between public management and political dynamics. It is hard to see how to influence the accountability system, short termism and silos and much else if you do not address the intersection of the public management system with the political. You give no justification for excluding consideration of the role and impact of the political system including Ministers.

### **Show the evidence that comprehensive change in the public management system will make the biggest difference.**

I wonder why, with all you could have chosen, you decided to focus on the public management system? You do not give us the evidence that attending to the public management system will make the most powerful difference to persistent disadvantage.

Could you not compare the evidence on shifts in the public management system to a range of other potential interventions that are as radical but more direct and immediate? I am not an expert on the literature on powerful interventions, but it might include the impact of a universal basic income; significant investment in the maternity and post-natal periods; some type of social investment approach, a wide-ranging ramped up whanau-ora approach. You will know what else you considered and what you rejected – tell us.

Could you explain how a comprehensive redesign of the public management system is vital for every aspect of public service work – regulation, environmental protection, international security issues and much more. You argue that the operation of the public management system is not fit for purpose for impacting persistent disadvantage. (and I can certainly see this). But is this shift across every single sector essential? Consider focusing your recommendations for optimal impact.

**Assuming you do have evidence that transforming the public management system is the most powerful intervention possible, lay out the rationale as to why the four areas that you have chosen are the most important.**

What is your evidence that the four areas you have chosen will have a direct impact upon persistent disadvantage? Did you analyse a range of shifts within the public management system that could be effective and powerful, before you decided on the four you have chosen? Lay out your rationale more clearly. Your analysis could be very convincing and super charge the many voices already arguing for change, rather than just repeating what they say.

I am not an expert, but if co-design, partnership and devolution are important, might you not also focus on building the capability and capacity amongst public servants involved in doing this work? I appreciate this will involve shifting the authorising environment around them.

**Could you lay out your implementation path, so that we can see that such change is feasible?**

You propose a massive shift to the public management system – every aspect of the way public servants think and work. Is it feasible and achievable in a reasonable timeframe that will profoundly impact the people living in persistent disadvantage? Try to lay out the implementation steps. I appreciate that full implementation may take a very long time, but how would you begin?

I liked your chapter on “inspiration for the way forward”. Imagine if you implemented your vision by relentlessly focused on scaling up these exciting initiatives, removing barriers and learning as it is tackled. This is a stronger bottom-up-approach, building on success, supporting the community and the best of the public service, demonstrating mutual respect for all, building from practical best practice. You could shape the top down actions as you go potentially very powerfully.

Have you considered focusing on just one of your four areas – probably changing aspects of the accountability system if your evidence shows this to have the greatest power. Then combine this with some recommendations on major policy shifts, primarily be led from the political domain.

**I have some worries about where you have got to so far, but there is still time.**

I am worried that you are in an echo chamber, primarily being heard and engaging with the converted. One of your panels included only people deeply supportive of your report - robust debate and alternative perspectives on the best way forward would probably benefit you, within the context of acknowledgement of the impact of colonisation and racism.

I am worried that you will condemn all dissonant voices as “elites”, wanting to preserve unfairness (in the words of one of your panelists). Voices such as the Southern Initiative have eloquently described what is needed but these voices are not always heard enough. The Productivity Commission can bring the voices and ideas to the public (what media coverage have you had?) and above all decision makers, thereby breathing real life into the ideas and making significant traction (is your report resonating with these decision-makers in the public sector?)

This kaupapa of reducing persistent disadvantage is so important as your data and your discourse emphasizes – it is worthy of an impactful final report.

**Shenagh Gleisner October 30<sup>th</sup> 2022.**