

## **Preface**

This summary is made based off of ideas, observations or experiences I have had and therefore will be quite a narrow view. I use broad strokes but on occasion I do mention experiences where it is relevant. I hope that with others submitting their own experiences we will get a good range of observations and ideas.

## **Employment, a broad view**

I am of the opinion that you are severely disadvantaged if you do not have a good support network within New Zealand. It can be incredibly difficult to live well if you don't have a supportive family or don't have a good group of friends. This can be from growing up with unsupportive family but also if you've moved or are a recent immigrant etc. This is especially important if you have a disability, mental health issues or anything else that effects your ability to look after yourself.

Why I think this is such a factor is because of the "hidden" markets and knowledge. Most of the better jobs, flats or other knowledge or advantages are passed through friends or family. A support network also looks out for you to stop you from being taken advantage of – Like for example if WINZ doesn't mention a services you're entitled to etc. It is also important because you can share resources like housing, cars/transportation, money or food. Life can be incredibly hard if you are in a disadvantaged position and you have no one else to rely on especially with the current price of basic goods such as housing/flating, cars, petrol and food.

Probably the simplest short term solution in order to secure housing and food without a support network is employment however there are many barriers that need to be overcome which I will shortly discuss.

Because of these barriers I strongly believe that a person should be able to support themselves without access to a support network or to employment. In the long term I think we need to make employment an option and not a necessity- In other words to have something in place like a guaranteed income.

## **Employment short term solutions - current issues and barriers**

### **Neurodivergence and a lack of a strong network**

It is my personal experience and of others I know that many New Zealand employers tend to hire for team fit and not necessarily on merit. This once again is also where networking becomes an advantage - most jobs are filled through the "hidden" job market, through colleagues.

Candidates are also hired after a job interview which is often a bad way to judge if someone will be a good employee or skilled at the job (unless the interviewing skills are directly related to what the job is like a receptionist but terrible for something like engineering)

This is relevant to one of the points I want to make that those who are neurodivergent such as those with ADHD or ASD are at a disadvantage when interviewing and keeping a job.

I have found that employers are not willing to compromise for differences in the way people want to work even if it would be more efficient or easier for that person. This makes work unnecessarily harder and stressful – For example putting them in an environment where they cannot hear or concentrate or forcing them to write notes when it could be easier for them to use a dictophone etc. Being unable to work in the way the employer has wanted me to work has caused me to lose my job before, even when working my hardest.

I think this could also be applicable to “invisible illnesses” such as chronic pain, diabetes or fatigue. It is hard for employers to believe that they can be unable to perform certain tasks when there is no obvious outward sign so they blame the employee.

### **Ideas:**

- Training for more awareness of neurodivergence at companies – More awareness of the human rights act allowing for more flexible working conditions
- Encouraging flexible options for hiring outside of just using a job interview in a room- For example if they don't feel comfortable with an interview could they answer the questions using email, or if a job interview is necessary let them have the questions first or the interview could be done while walking etc. Or the candidate could submit a test or even do a day or week as a trial run- Or they could have an advocate like a former employer or co worker come with them to an interview to answer any questions the candidate is struggling to answer.
- Encouraging companies to allow for different people to adopt their own style of working as long as it works- working from home, allowing for more time, accepting dictation instead of notes etc. etc.
- More organisations that could help neurodivergent people into employment- There are organisations that do this but they mostly people with more obvious ASD and I don't think there is one for ADHD.

### **Lack of experience – Unwillingness to train**

I have also found that the employers I have worked for have been unwilling to train their employees- Instead preferring to either let them sink or swim or to hire someone that has all the skills already. This leads to the catch 22 of being unable to get a job due to lack of experience but then being unable to get

experience without getting a job. Companies expect people to pay for a course or expect another company to hire them in order to get the experience. It also traps people in work they would rather not do but they only have experience in that one type of work or field. This also disadvantages people who are unable to access the higher education necessary because it's too expensive or who don't have colleagues within the industry they want to get into to get the necessary experience.

### **Ideas:**

- It is understandable why the companies don't train their employees anymore. They are worried that if they spend the money to train people they would then take that experience and leave for better pay at another company. However a common reason why people leave is there is no incentive to stay- often the company will not promote them or give them a pay rise to stay.
- I think companies need to provide training then value their staff and provide better incentives to stay. I think a good incentive might be to write into the contracts that you will receive guaranteed pay rises at certain intervals which would eliminate a lot of uncertainty.
- I would like it if there were more options for both parties employer and employee to have a sort of trial run to check for suitability on both sides. The 90 day trial is supposed to achieve this but the employer is often allowed to give shorter notice of termination than the employee (employer might give 2 weeks notice but the employee has to give 4). Often when applying for a job it's hard to tell if it is suitable until you're already hired so it would be good if there were options to tackle this.

### **Less lower skilled jobs can be filled by women**

A lot of the lower skilled jobs are physically demanding and better suited for people who have more strength, height, grip strength and arm span. For example; security guards, decorators(such as painters), construction and building, Laboring, welding, scaffolding, machining jobs, meat processing/freezing works etc. These jobs tend to be filled by men more than women.

Therefore it is possible that women could be more disadvantaged as there are less opportunities for work available to them.

### **Ideas**

- Possibly offer more help/services to unemployed women

### **Discrimination due to drug testing**

A lot of lower skilled jobs require drug testing as a part of a pre-employment check when it isn't really required. The logic behind drug testing is flawed as it unfairly persecutes some types of drug users while not detecting others – Cannabis can be detected up to 2 weeks after use while Methamphetamine only takes hours after use before it cannot be detected. For a job like fruit or vegetable picking where they are not doing anything that would be effected by drugs (such as operating heavy machinery) it feels like unnecessarily punishing someone for their lifestyle choices.

### **Ideas**

- Get rid of drug testing for jobs where it is unnecessary

### **Overall lack of flexibility with employers**

Over the lockdowns it has been proven that working from home and remote working is a viable option. Yet for a lot of businesses they reverted back to status quo when the first lockdown lifted. Working remotely could really help people in smaller towns that don't have access to as many opportunities.

Often work also doesn't accommodate having children either – It would be nice if more businesses allowed you to move your hours around your child instead of putting them in childcare after school – Or let you pick them up from school and take them with you to work the last few hours. Childcare is a major cost to most parents

### **Ideas**

- Encourage businesses to hire remotely to support smaller towns and decrease the pressure to live in cities to be close to work. Maybe introduce a remote worker quota to hire people in more remote locations.
- Make fitting hours or more flexible hours the norm instead of the exception
- Allow people to take their kids to work

### **Lack of opportunities**

New Zealand is a small country and we have a lack of job opportunities here, especially in more rural areas. I don't know if I have anything more to say on the subject or if I have any solutions for this but it is a big contributing problem with finding employment – The jobs aren't there.

### **Wages not keeping up with inflation**

New Zealand has a high minimum wage but we have had to increase our minimum wage repeatedly because it's commonly the norm in low skilled jobs.

Even with current wages rising it has not been keeping up with rising cost of all basic essentials – Food, Rent/Accommodation, housing, electricity, petrol.

Another thing I want to mention is that our tax brackets are very old and have also not kept up with increased wages which means people are being taxed at too high a rate. This is important because the money has more importance/value when you're poorer. Small increases in the amount you have make a big difference to quality of life/what you can afford, even if you get a tax return you often need the money immediately for rent or food.

## **Ideas**

- Because our minimum wage is already very high in comparison to other countries I think it's more likely that our necessities are overpriced. I think we should work on lowering the price of necessities rather than continually increasing the minimum wage at a too slow pace. I know with renting at least the rent seems to go up to match the minimum wage thereby negating the effect it has.
- Adopt the same tax brackets as Australia

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## **Employment Long term solutions:**

As stated previously I think in the long term we need to put less emphasis on work as the solution to getting our basic needs met. There are too many people that don't have a support network and don't have access to employment due to barriers in the employment process, where they are paid enough to live and that they feel safe at.

I also think that we value paid work too highly and don't recognise the value of a lot of unpaid work;

A parent being a full time parent is doing work that is just as valuable if not more than most paid work- their kids are probably going to be more well adjusted and less likely to get into trouble later in life. Someone's time spent working on their fitness is more valuable than spending that time working because they'll be happier and healthier and less likely to need an intervention from the healthcare system - same with spending time with friends which relaxes us. It should be noted that most of the scientific discoveries made in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were "gentlemen scientists". These were people with their needs met so they didn't have to work and because they had time available they used it to research, investigate and make discoveries.

## **ideas**

We should let peoples basic needs be met; housing, food, electricity and internet using a guaranteed income.

## **Food**

New Zealand is the world's breadbasket – we produce enough food to feed 40 million people. Yet our own food prices are the same as it would be overseas, in fact in some cases more expensive. The cost of basic staples in New Zealand is too high and often leads to health consequences. As people are disincentivised to buy what they need they instead settle for foods to bulk out their meals like pasta, potato, rice or bread.

People should be able to buy enough protein and vegetables to keep them full and healthy and should not have to be effected by food insecurity.

### **A lack of competition between supermarkets and a lack of alternatives**

New Zealand has a problem with duopolies, the main one being our supermarkets. I think we need to take anti-competition laws more seriously and punish businesses that do anti-competitive practices.

Another problem is there is seemingly a lack of options when it comes to getting your food and goods. There are farmers markets which a lot of people may not have access to and are often only open on one day or grocery boxes or meal plan boxes which are often overpriced or don't let you choose exactly what you want.

### **Ideas**

- Take the breaking of anti-competition laws more seriously, have more penalties.
- I would love to see more completely online grocery options that co-ordinate with nearby suppliers or local growers that could compete with supermarkets.
- Another alternative I would like is a store that only sells the basics; vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy, eggs, vegetarian food as well as basic household items such as toilet paper and soap etc.. Supermarkets waste floor space on having too many options available such as ten varieties of apple or having a whole isle dedicated to fizzy drinks. This supermarket instead would just sell a couple brands or maybe just a budget brand of each thing. You could save money by buying in bulk because you're buying a lot of one thing. I would also like to see options available to buy cheap "defective" produce that is still good such as vegetables that have cosmetic problems like wonky carrots or parsnips that have spots.

### **Our own produce is too expensive**

I am considering these the basic staples : vegetables, fruit, meat, dairy, eggs and vegetarian food. These foods are too expensive within New Zealand, especially as we produce a lot of it ourselves.

I also want to point out we don't have many options available in terms of quality. All of the fruit and vegetables in the supermarket are the perfect restaurant quality without defects or spots- I feel we are wasting an opportunity here to have better access to the cosmetically less pleasing but still perfectly edible fruit and veg.

### **Ideas**

- For all of these items if they are produced locally we should get rid of the GST and put it instead on cheap sugary items such as – Soda, biscuits, cakes, chips, confectioneries and processed meat like ham and bacon. These foods should be considered treats but they are often the same price or cheaper than the healthier options
- Let people have better access to the lower quality fruit and vegetables which are only cosmetically defective.

### **Housing**

Housing is an obvious issue in New Zealand which is much talked about and affects everyone.

We have expensive housing and rentals which never seem to decrease in price and inflate in price faster than wages. Despite this they are often low quality and there is a lack of options available. They are damp and cause health problems as well as cost a fortune to heat due to poor insulation.

Due to a lack of housing and how expensive it can be to rent it can prevent people suffering from abuse from moving out due to being unable to secure a place. Likewise it can prevent people suffering from health issues caused by damp unhealthy homes from finding a better place to live too.

### **Renting is too expensive**

Rent has repeatedly increased to match any increases in income that renters receive. For example the rent has gone up when students got a rise in the student allowance, when wages go up and easily absorbs the accommodation supplement.

I think housing needs to start being treated like a right again and not a business which means more restrictions on what Landlords can do.

### **Ideas**

- I think rent should be capped as a percentage of a person's total income – for example no more than 30 percent of a person's income. This would

prevent any increases in income or allowance from being immediately swallowed up.

### **Renting needs to be better**

One of the reasons why houses are so coveted for many New Zealanders is because of how terrible the experience of renting is. If renting was better it would be considered more of a long term option for many people which would put less pressure on people to save for a house.

#### **Ideas**

- Adopt similar renting laws to that of Europe, people should have more options for longer leases and more control over the house such as being allowed to paint, allowing for reasonable wear and tear, being allowed to use the garden etc. If people were more invested in the rental houses they lived in and were able to make changes they could do things to improve their health if the house was making them sick(remove carpets that get dusty, add thicker more insulating curtains etc.)
- Landlord or property manager check ins need to happen at less frequent intervals, no-one likes to feel like a guest in their own home.
- Landlords should not be able to dictate the life style of the tenant, they should not be able to specify no pets or no smokers. Pets can really help people through tough times and it is cruel that people can dictate whether or not they can have them.

### **Lack of options with housing**

Right now most of peoples options are limited to 3-4 bedroom single story weatherboard, single glaze, south facing cold damp housing from the 60's and 70's. I'm not entirely sure why this is as there are many different living situations that people are in in which a 3-4 bedroom house of this type is a bit awkward. Singles that want to live on their own, couples without children and larger families have to compensate with the fact that we only seem to have one type of housing available to buy or rent and they all have to compete with each other driving up demand.

I feel like local counsels are being quite restrictive with the types of buildings that can be built and where they can be built and often not for any logical reasons. In addition the cost of building in general prevents people from doing so.

I feel as though we also suffer from anti-competition problems in our building industry which causes our products to be horrifically expensive.

#### **Ideas**

- Encourage more types of buildings and housing solutions being built, more high density, more apartments, budget kitset options, convert buildings not traditionally used for housing into housing or flats. I would even think it would be cool to have extreme budget options for students that could be like capsule hotels- beds can be shut off or locked to the outside but with shared communal areas like a hostel.
- Reduce NIMBYisms power by taking some power away from the councils – Declare it a national emergency if needed. As a current example of what I’m talking about high density housing is not being considered in mount Victoria, Wellington to preserve hundreds of damp mouldy character homes.
- Be sensible with sentimentality – “character” status homes should not prevent high density housing or better quality housing from being built. Be sensible and preserve the best examples of character buildings and not an entire suburbs worth of them.
- Also possibly have a limit on how long a historical or character building can be left empty and not repaired. If it’s too expensive or no ones willing to fix it or earthquake proof it it should be knocked down after 10 years or so.
- To encourage competition with our local building supplies and suppliers could we not consider adopting other countries building codes so we could import cheaper kitset buildings or pre-fabricated items like windows. There are countries with similar seismic issues and climate as New Zealand such as Japan or parts of Chile so their codes may be compatible here. Imagine being able to buy triple glazed windows from Sweden etc.

### **Land or house hoarding needs to be discouraged**

I have stated before that housing needs to be treated like a right again and not a business. Houses should be encouraged to live in not to be collected, the main reason being everyone needs shelter but also because investing in property doesn’t really contribute much to overall society (doesn’t provide many jobs or innovations, exports or inventions etc).

### **Ideas**

- Land tax or CGT or both. If you use your land inefficiently you’ll be penalised which should encourage more high density housing and a CGT should encourage people to hold onto their houses and live in them rather than sell them on.

### **The homeless are disproportionately effected by certain laws**

There are two laws I can currently think of that effect people that are currently homeless more than people with housing.

New Zealand started enforcing freedom camping laws in order to clamp down on tourists effecting the environment but now it is used to prevent people from sleeping in their cars in the city. Freedom camping in vehicles that are not self contained is permitted in some areas as long as you park near a toilet but each region in New Zealand is allowed to decide what areas this is allowed. In Wellington city there is nowhere you are legally allowed to freedom camp for free without it being a self contained vehicle.

Another law that effects people living in campgrounds says you cannot stay longer than 2 weeks at the campground, meaning you have to constantly jump between campgrounds.

### **Ideas**

- I think these two laws unfairly effects people who are already disadvantaged. The Freedom camping law should be taken out of effect because we currently don't have foreign tourists here anyway. We can reconsider if we need the law again in future if it becomes a problem again.

### **Other thoughts**

Other things I can think of:

#### **Persuing anti-competition with other industries within New Zealand**

Other monopolies or duopolies within New Zealand should be investigated;

- Petrol station prices
- Electricity companies
- Construction suppliers(timber, gib board etc.)

### **Drugs**

New Zealand has increased it's cigarette prices a large amount over a long period of time to disincentivise people to smoke and it has been successful in dropping the numbers. However most of the people that are now currently smokers are the most addicted and often the most stressed and poor, therefore I think lowering the prices may be option to relieve some financial pressure.