



# **Submission on the Inquiry into Breaking Disadvantage**

**Submitted on behalf of:  
*Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua  
Māori Public Health Unit***

1. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua would like to thank the New Zealand Productivity Commission for the opportunity to contribute feedback on the development of the Terms of Reference for a new inquiry into the drivers of persistent disadvantage throughout Aotearoa.
2. Persistent disadvantage has a significant impact across both people's lifetime as well as across generations and therefore it is vital that this inquiry captures the voices, experiences, and institutional knowledge of whanau, hapū, iwi and hāpori.
3. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua wishes to be kept up to date with this piece of work as it progresses through its stages of completion and would like to contribute feedback again if the opportunity arises.
4. As an iwi, Ngāti Whātua's tribal boundaries extend from Ōtāhuhu, in South Auckland, and extend to Whangarei and Waipoua in the North. Ngāti Whātua's hapu collective and iwi affiliations are to Ngā Oho, Ngāi Tāhuhu, Ngāti Hinga, Ngāti Mauku, Ngāti Rango, Ngāti Rongo, Ngāti Ruinga, Ngāti Torehina, Ngāti Weka, Ngāti Whiti, Patuharakeke, Te Parawhau, Te Popoto, Te Roroa, Te Uriroi, Te Taoū, Te Uri Ngutu, Te Kuihi and Te Uri o Hau.
5. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua was established in 1988, for the purpose of settling the treaty claims of the Ngāti Whātua People. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua is constituted as a body corporate by the Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua Act 1988 and is a Māori Trust Board under the Māori Trust Boards Act 1955. It is the sole representative body and authorised voice to deal with issues affecting the whole of Ngāti Whātua.
6. Ngāti Whātua prides itself on always being an iwi of manaaki, and through this philosophy can promote, enhance, and advocate for quality living for Ngāti Whātua uri, Māori, and all peoples living within the rohe. Given its traumatic history, Ngāti Whātua are leaders and innovators in the space of advocacy for Māori rights and continue to advocate for Māori health rights which are enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi. We support the view that Te Tiriti o Waitangi recognises the status of whānau, hapū and iwi, and reinforces the rights of Māori to taonga, including wellbeing.

***What are the main aspects of disadvantage that should be investigated in this inquiry?***

7. This inquiry provides an opportunity to determine many of the complex, overlapping issues and the relationships between these, that impact many whānau and directly affect their ability to thrive.
8. It seems pertinent for this inquiry to be done now, given the current environmental context created by the presence of and response to Covid-19. The challenges presented by this virus have highlighted the persistent disadvantage within our communities, and

the many challenges faced in obtaining even life's basic essentials such as food, clean water and adequate housing.

9. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua advocates for a number of aspects of disadvantage to be included in this inquiry's investigation. These include:
  - Colonisation
  - Racism
  - Intergenerational Trauma
  - Tamariki Ora
  - Social determinants such as housing and education
10. We believe this inquiry should have a large focus on colonisation and the impacts this has had on the wellbeing of the Māori population. The significant losses of land, resources and culture experienced by Māori as a result of colonisation have been carried throughout generations, contributing to cycles of intergenerational trauma and disadvantage for many. This disadvantage is further exacerbated by the modern structures and systems in New Zealand, largely operating under a Western model.
11. Racism and its contribution to disadvantage should also be a key aspect investigated within this inquiry. This should incorporate the effects of both interpersonal racism and institutionalised racism and the impact these have on the way our system is structured to better suit the needs of some groups more than others. As a part of this, an analysis on bias should be completed, both conscious and unconscious and how these play out in everyday life. All of these aspects should be considered as to how they adversely impact groups and how they continue to perpetuate disadvantage for some.
12. We recommend this inquiry looks into the structures and processes of key systems where inequities are prevalent throughout the country. This is including, but not limited to, the education, justice and health systems. Throughout all three of these, Māori experience significant disadvantage, with clear inequities present.
13. As reported in the consultation document, children are significantly impacted throughout their lives by persistent disadvantage if they are exposed to disadvantage early in their lives. As early disadvantage is difficult to overcome, it is vital that this inquiry assess the key drivers of early life disadvantage, and considers ways that whānau can best be supported through pregnancy and the preschool years to give children the best opportunities to succeed.
14. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātu recommends that this inquiry also take into consideration the social determinants and the inequitable access to these across society. Difficulties accessing these social determinants such as sufficient housing, education, health care and

employment all significantly impacts individuals and family's ability to thrive across the lifespan.

***Where should the Commission focus its research effort?***

15. Research efforts should focus on both collecting quantitative and qualitative data, to be able to pull together a comprehensive understanding of how disadvantage impacts individuals and families, as well as New Zealand society as a whole. Priority must be placed on Māori and Pacific peoples, to ensure inequities are addressed and eliminated.
16. We believe the qualitative research is vital in this piece of work in order to capture the lived experience of those facing persistent disadvantage, including what keeps them and their families trapped in the cycle of disadvantage as well as what would help them break out. This should also include experiences of those who have managed to break the cycle of disadvantage and what helped them to break the cycle, as well as the experiences of social workers and community groups (including hapū and iwi) supporting those facing disadvantage. This input is crucial to determine where resources should be prioritised in the future.

***Colonisation, Racism, and Intergenerational Trauma:***

17. We suggest that thorough research be undertaken with Māori and Pacific families to better understand the long-term impacts of colonisation, institutionalised racism, and discrimination. These are **key** issues resulting in intergenerational trauma, disconnection, disadvantage, mental health issues and health inequities.
18. Quantitative and qualitative data from whānau and Pacific families is crucial to identify pain points, barriers and obstacles within modern structures and models in Aotearoa, preventing them from reaching their potential. Furthermore, whānau can identify the necessary solutions or system-wide changes to eliminate disadvantage and discrimination. We hope to see such changes have a flow on effect to the wider population of Aotearoa, eliminating racism, discrimination, and inequities in all settings.

***Tamariki Ora and Support for Parents:***

19. During pregnancy and in early years is a key window of opportunity to provide parents with the necessary support to make positive decisions, and create healthy home environments and habits. This timing is crucial to ensure a healthy first 1,000 days for our tamariki. A key solution to address disadvantage can be implemented through Tamariki Ora nurses or Plunket services, to ensure whānau have adequate resources, housing, access to food, employment, social connectedness etc, and referrals to further support if needed. We also suggest that help and information be readily accessible to families, for instance, through marketing campaigns and apps informing parents of where they can go for help across all areas. We ask that government policy be explored to ensure measures,

funding and adequate resources are in place to support parents and give our pēpē the best starts in life.

***Education:***

20. Education is a crucial social determinant of health, often determining whether one experiences persistent advantage or disadvantage. We strongly support thorough research into education, particularly for Māori and Pacific tamariki, to identify gaps and areas of need. There are many disadvantaged tamariki in primary schools, who through no fault of their own, do not fit into or respond to the New Zealand education curriculum, often leading to truancy in secondary schooling. We ask that these issues be explored to identify the need for additional funding, resources, and system reforms to ensure tamariki and whānau have access to education tailored to their needs and diverse cultures. This includes increased funding for extra literacy tuition, increased pay for teachers, and wrap-around social services for whānau to be able to foster healthy home and learning environments.

***Housing:***

21. We ask that the government focus its efforts on housing, to ensure Māori and Pacific families have access to safe and healthy homes. This includes adequate funding for the Healthy Homes Initiative, an increase in safe and healthy social housing and emergency accommodation, and an increase in affordable homes. We also ask for accessible support for adults and families to gain understanding of financial capability, and for such life skills be incorporated into secondary school curriculum.

***Where should Government focus its effort on finding solutions?***

22. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua believes that solutions to address and eliminate the cycle of disadvantage for Māori can be identified through consultation with whānau, hapū and iwi. It is of paramount importance that this consultation is carried out to identify factors that contribute to disadvantage, and how whānau can best be supported to break this cycle. This will also require a significant shift in trust, resource, funding, authority, and infrastructure.
23. This shift will also require a substantial increase in Māori representation across government leadership, and government agencies (from a governance and leadership level through to workforce) to ensure equity is at the forefront of all models. Māori leadership must display honesty, integrity, subject matter expertise, fairness, and unity.
24. For key social determinants including housing, healthcare, education and tamariki ora, we ask that an increase in funding and resourcing be provided to community based services including Māori and Pasifika providers. These organisations connect best with their communities, by identifying need, and delivering culturally appropriate support, for instance: by Māori, for Māori service providers.

25. We expect that the Māori Health Authority will play an integral role in eliminating wider inequities and particularly health disadvantages for whānau. We ask that the health reforms inform a system wide approach across all government agencies to align their services and collaborate, to best support Māori to reach their fullest potential.
  
26. Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Whātua would like to thank the New Zealand Productivity Commission again for the opportunity to contribute feedback on the development of the Terms of Reference for the inquiry into the drivers of persistent disadvantage throughout Aotearoa.