

To the Productivity Commission Committee
Submission on: "Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage"
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Tēnā koutou ki ngā Rangatira o te whare nei!

I am writing this submission with in the perspective of a social work student and as a tangata whenua from Ngāti Wehi Wehi - Manakau, Aotearoa.

Introduction

Overall the following submission focuses on the tangata whenua - te iwi Māori and establishing upfront the '*disproportionality*' of general poor levels of Māori wellbeing represented within most areas across the governmental sectors, including for mental health, education, corrections, homelessness, poverty, Oranga Tamariki and unemployment that has significantly contributed to the accumulative creation of "*persistent disadvantage*". A point of focus is discussion around the causation of the '*disproportionality*' - looking at the continual effects of colonisation as well as conflicting ideologies, specifically western neoliberalism ideology and indigenous Māori world views. The provision of safe, warm and affordable housing is also raised as a specific issue to help address 'persistent disadvantage'.

The 'Commission' has outlined that the inquiry is about adding value and therefore does not want to '*duplicate*' other work (The New Zealand Productivity commission, 2021), however, it is difficult not to be able to provide discussions around important recurring issues particularly in relation to Māori. Arguably, '*duplicity*' in terms of issues, analysis, findings, may strengthen the research corpus for this inquiry and add value for other inter-sectoral collaborations.

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

Colonisation

It is proposed that the continuum of colonisation is the '*root cause*' of persistent disadvantage for many Māori and that further investigations will help formulate and provide for better policies. The '*Commission*' has made mention that "*colonisation*" is a contributing factor in terms of disadvantage for Māori, particularly the loss of large tracts of whenua through land confiscation legislations and loss of lives and livelihoods from the wars (ibid).

Discussion regarding the negative impacts of colonisation need to become '*front and centre*' of this inquiry and highlighted in the ToR as the number one cause for the loss of Māori wellbeing,

the loss of Māori *'productivity'* due to the dispossession of whenua, a place to stand and call home, and connection with their awa, maunga and ngāhere.

Furthermore, education and *'cultural competency'* regarding deliberate colonising policies and practices will help inform experts on panels and policy analysts when dealing with te iwi Māori, which could help to shift any *'unconscious bias'*, abating continued colonisation. Unconscious bias and institutional racism towards Māori is generally acknowledged by the government as an ongoing concern, particularly in relation to meaningful policy that addresses the institutional racism and other disparities in the social sector (Provoost et al, 2021). A raft of initiatives have started in this area such as the cultural safety standards developed by the Medical Council of New Zealand, focusing on self-reflection of doctor's attitudes and biases which could affect the cultural safety of their patients (Middleton et al, 2021).

Jackson (2020) explains that the academic reference of *"rural- urban drift"* that is commonly used to describe a mass exodus of Māori moving to the cities throughout World War two and after, was in fact enforced by deliberate colonising policies that began with the *"National Emergency Regulations"*. The main point being that Māori did not just decide one day to *'drift'* en masse to the South of Auckland or Porirua, leaving behind their tūrangawaewae, to be utilised as cheap labour for *'essential wartime industries'*, (Jackson, 2020).

Recommendation

- **That colonisation is not just skimmed over but treated as the "root cause" of persistent disadvantage for Māori and is included 'upfront' in the ToR.**

Colonisation policies of the 1940's - 1980's

While this first group of Māori were working in the cities, the government passed a tranche of other colonising legislation including variations of the Town and Country planning Act, which effectively made it impossible for Māori to return to their homelands to build a home. Just recently at the beginning of this year the government announced that amendments to the Te Ture Whenua Māori Act 1993, will remove long standing barriers to the development and the use of papakāinga housing on Māori land (Jackson, W. 2021). This highlights an eighty year long gap where many Māori could not be *'productive'* on their own land forcing them to live in substandard housing and state housing in the cities. It was from these conditions that germinated the myriad of intergenerational problems that has culminated into the phenomena of *'persistent disadvantage'* in which a disproportionate cohort of disenfranchised Māori are living today.

After World War two the growth of manufacturing industries translated into further demand for Māori to provide cheap labour, and Pasifika people were brought over to bolster the workforce . Jackson describes this part of history for Māori as post second World War colonisation (Jackson, 2020).

The point of capturing this part of New Zealand's colonising history (which spanned over four decades, from the beginning of the 1940's through to the beginning of the 1980's), is to highlight the origins of why a large section of Māori are currently living in intergenerational '*persistent disadvantage*', arguably caused by '*persistent colonisation*'. It is important to trace the colonising history because it helps to understand why things are the way they are and from that premise effective policies to ameliorate '*persistent disadvantage*' particularly for Māori can come from a place of integrity, understanding and '*aroha*'.

Recommendation

Understanding this part of our colonial history is vital to progress and inform good research in order to find solutions and that it was from this cohort of Māori who were pushed to the cities that became New Zealand's cheap labour force, spanning four decades, who's descendants now find themselves in '*persistent disadvantage*'.

Neoliberalism

The advent of the neoliberal era in the 1980's resulted in many manufacturing companies moving overseas creating massive job loss and compounded by increasing housing rents, exacerbated further impoverishment for this cohort of Māori in particular.

Central to the core tenets of neoliberal ideology is the eurocentric view of 'individualism' and following a 'monetarism' economic policy whereby the market is essentially left unregulated with minimal intervention from the state, instead the government plays an active role in de-regulating the market for private business. Neoliberals strongly believe in the 'trickle-down' effect from prospering companies which will benefit all of society including for the poor (Stanely-Clarke, 2015). In the analysis of the FIRE (finance, insurance and real estate) economy, Kelsey (2015), concludes that poverty has been exacerbated exponentially throughout the neo-liberal era, creating a massive gap between the rich and poor.

A large section of New Zealand population (and increasing) are casualties of the neoliberal ideology. It simply does not work - it is not sustainable. It is not a model of caring and sharing and one that is based on '*aroha*' on the rights of human dignity and for Papatūānuku - Earth Mother. For Māori, neoliberalism ideology and politics is a modern evolution of the western liberalism mindset, arguably a more stronger and pervasive version of colonisation.

It is recommended that government policies are designed in a way that does not impact negatively and further marginalise Māori, particularly Māori who are suffering from '*persistent disadvantage*'. For example the social investment policies of the fifth National party, that focused on long term benefit dependency, using actuarial data analysis, resulted in targeting Māori and Pacifica single mothers to find employment. It was found that the policies were controlling and punitive, which did not take into account their already marginalised position, forcing them into low wage conditions, compounding further disadvantage for them and their tamariki (Smith, 2021).

Recommendation

- **That government policies are designed in a way that does not impact negatively and further marginalise Māori and perpetuate further disadvantage and that this is reflected in the ToR.**

Where should the commission focus its research effort?

Housing

Increased investment in social housing needs to be the immediate urgent priority. Investment into buying, renovating, and/or building warm safe and affordable housing will go a long way in breaking the vicious cycle of *'persistent disadvantage'*. Moana Jackson describes this cycle as the *'cycle of confinement'* (2020). The Welfare Expert Advisory Group and others have identified that in order to reduce child poverty, it is critical (and a human right) that children live in warm, safe and affordable housing (in Figenshow et al, 2021).

Analysing and researching past political decisions regarding policy or indeed the absence of policy is important to understand the burgeoning housing crisis reality that many New Zealanders face today. The financialisation of the housing market within the framework of neoliberal politics and economics has been touted as the primary cause, along with deliberate government decisions and policies reinforcing and benefitting the sprouting of national and international property investment portfolios. For example NZ Treasury for a period of time, were of the belief that the private sectors in the rental market, the building and development, and the finance industry would naturally regulate the housing market in terms of housing supply and affordable rents. NZ Treasury also advocated that housing shortages were related to levels of income and therefore a *'welfare'* issue (in Figenshow et al, 2021). Today we are dealing with the fall out of those decisions, resulting in a housing crisis whereby Māori are disproportionately affected, and in a time where the world is facing incredible uncertainty in the form of Covid-19 global pandemic and climate emergency.

Further advancements to facilitate housing on whenua that Māori already own will contribute towards alleviating the housing shortage as well as a measure towards breaking the cycle of *'persistent disadvantage'*.

The Dissolvement of the homeownership schemes of the 1990's has been linked to the decreased building of low-cost housing, increases of rents and homelessness (Figenshow et al, 2021, Kelsey 2015). Less than fifty per cent of Māori own their own home. In 2006, home ownership figures showed that only 42 per cent of Māori owned their own home, leaving the majority of the Māori population vulnerable to the volatile current high house rental market regime. The reinstatement of government homeownership loans will be a welcomed relief for many and give a lot of hope and certainty, particularly for our younger generations, which is important for the future success and productivity of our country.

Research efforts looking into the housing crisis as a learning process to help alleviate the crisis now and to avoid any recurrence in the future is critical for all of our tamariki - mokopuna and for the future wellbeing of our country - Aotearoa New Zealand.

Recommendations

- **Increases in social housing investment is the major and urgent priority;**
- **Continued investments and regulation changes to facilitate housing on whenua Māori; and**
- **The reinstatement of government homeownership loans, subsidies and other initiatives;**

Where should government focus its effort on finding solutions?

Ideological change

Solutions in seeking to break the cycle of persistent disadvantage for Māori lie in the political will of the government and general public to realise and understand that there needs to be an *'ideological'* change. Neoliberalism is hurting te iwi Māori, our tamariki, our whenua. It is therefore important to point out that government agencies including the Productivity Commission's (albeit well intentioned) ethos is couched firmly in the *'neoliberalism'* ideology, in terms of the definition of *'productivity'* and in terms of research and policy advice. This poses a conflict and an unbalanced bias for Māori who aspire to live and be Māori within kaupapa Māori informed by tikanga, who have an alternative view regarding *"productivity"* that is based on relationships, tikanga promoting balance and restoration, and the respect and *'aroha'* for Papatūānuku - Mother Earth (Matike Mai, 2016).

Recommendation

That the Commission look into an ideological change that promotes equity, a tikanga of restoration, good relationships, aroha and respect for Papatūānuku - Mother Earth.

Kaupapa Māori

Whilst the 'He Ara Waiora' looks like a really good kaupapa Māori framework, it is unclear 'how' this inquiry will use it, particularly for the assessment of an individual's - *'mana'* and *'wairua'* when gauging how *'persistent'* the *'disadvantage'* of that individual is experiencing. Furthermore, the definitions of each section regarding the different *'mana'* is a Pākehā interpretation and may not be relatable for whānau Māori.

Material wellbeing is critical for people suffering from *'persistent disadvantage'* who often do not have the bare essentials, including a warm house, affordable rent, enough kai, warm clothes and shoes, internet, and access to essential services. However, for Māori - *'wairua'*, is about whakapapa connections to the *'whenua'*, to your *'tūrangawaewae'*, to the *'maunga'*, to *'Papatūānuku'* and *'Ranginui'*, and being connected to your iwi, hapū and marae, (Broughton

1985, Durie 2011, Department of Social Welfare 1988, Royal, 2003). Ruka Broughton (1985) explains that wairua is: “...not an organisation, but more an organism”, (p.1). Māori are also more familiar with the terms: *mana whenua*, *mana atua*, and *mana tangata*.

Therefore applying a *taha* Māori perspective to the ‘He Ara Waiora’ framework may look different for Māori. Outcomes for a happier wairua-Māori may look more like a re-connection with: their *whenua*, their *tūrangawaewae*, their *Marae*, their *whānau*, their *whakapapa*.

Considering that Māori are disproportionately represented within the homelessness and poverty statistics as well as for most of the “Living Standard” measurements set out by Treasury (2020 in Cumming et al, 2021), a kaupapa Māori framework that delivers a *‘whānau-centred’* approach is more suited. It is noted that in the “*More Effective Social Services*” inquiry, the ‘*Commission*’ recommended the strengthening of Whānau Ora, and further ‘*devolvement*’ of social services for Māori, and that ‘*government should be open to opportunities for Māori to exercise mana whakahaere. This should be based on the Treaty of Waitangi principles of partnership, and active protection of Māori interests and of rangatiratanga.*’ (New Zealand Productivity Commission, 2015, p.40).

Recommendations

- **That other kaupapa Māori frameworks such as a whānau-centred frameworks that Whānau Ora apply are explored further for the purposes of this inquiry;**
- **that the ‘*commission*’ continue along this trajectory of thinking regarding the strengthening and resourcing of ‘for Māori by Māori’ services such as Whānau Ora.**

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti o Waitangi (te reo version), espouses a tikanga-based template that the Rangatira signed, which recognises the ethic of restoration and the willingness to share the whenua with another race of people in peace interdependently and independently. To give up ‘tino rangatiratanga’ was culturally incomprehensible (Jackson, 2020).

It is proposed that TeTiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi - underpin and inform the inquiry or at the very least be consistent with other recent and relevant inquiries of a similar nature for example the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal (2019) for primary health care. A key finding was that the Crown failed to ‘*properly fund the primary health care sector to pursue equitable health outcomes for Māori, by failing to target funding where it is needed most and failing to ensure money earmarked for Māori health issues is used for that purpose*’, (in Middleton et al, 2021). The Tribunal’s final report recommended that the The Tiriti principles of the ‘*Principle of Protection*’ and the ‘*Principle of Partnership*’ be expanded to include the ‘*Principle of Equity*’ - the right to expect equitable outcomes, and the ‘*Principle of Options*’ - the right to access all services including for kaupapa Māori services, (Waitangi Tribunal 2019, p.262).

In addition, it is proposed that the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in tandem with Te Tiriti, be routinely applied as part of the inquiry's 'toolbox' to help better inform research and policy advice in relation to Māori and '*persistent disadvantage*'.

Recommendations

- **That Te Tiriti o Waitangi/Treaty of Waitangi is in a prominent position within the ToR and is utilised as a major tool of guidance for the inquiry; and**
- **That the UNDRIP is used alongside Te Tiriti o Waitangi and included in the ToR**

Titiro whakamuri Kōkiri whakamua

Look back and reflect so you can move forward
(Learn the lessons from the past)

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