A Fair Chance for All - Breaking the Disadvantage Cycle: submission and feedback from the Waikato Wellbeing Project.

Introduction

1. You have been asked to prepare the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a new inquiry into the drivers of persistent disadvantage within people's lifetimes and across generations in Aotearoa New Zealand. In developing the ToR, you have sought feedback and advice on four essential questions:

    a. What are the main aspects of disadvantage that should be investigated in this inquiry?
    b. Where should the Commission focus its research effort?
    c. Where should government focus its effort on finding solutions?
    d. Is there anything else that you would like to see covered in this inquiry?

2. The Waikato Wellbeing Project is pleased to respond to your call for submissions to assist you in framing the above inquiry. In developing this submission, we have engaged with our project manu taki -target leaders who come from a wide range of social, cultural and economic backgrounds from across the Waikato region. Our manu taki are community leaders who are at the front line of the challenge to achieve our sustainable development goals (SDGs), so their views are an excellent reflection of the lived experiences of people in relation to disadvantage and its associated issues.

3. We have considered the above questions- and our summarised feedback is provided at the end of this submission (Attachment 1). We would like to provide some broader perspectives in this inquiry to begin with, as we see the issue of disadvantage as one of the most important challenges facing Aotearoa New Zealand, not just from a productivity point of view, but in terms of overall wellbeing.
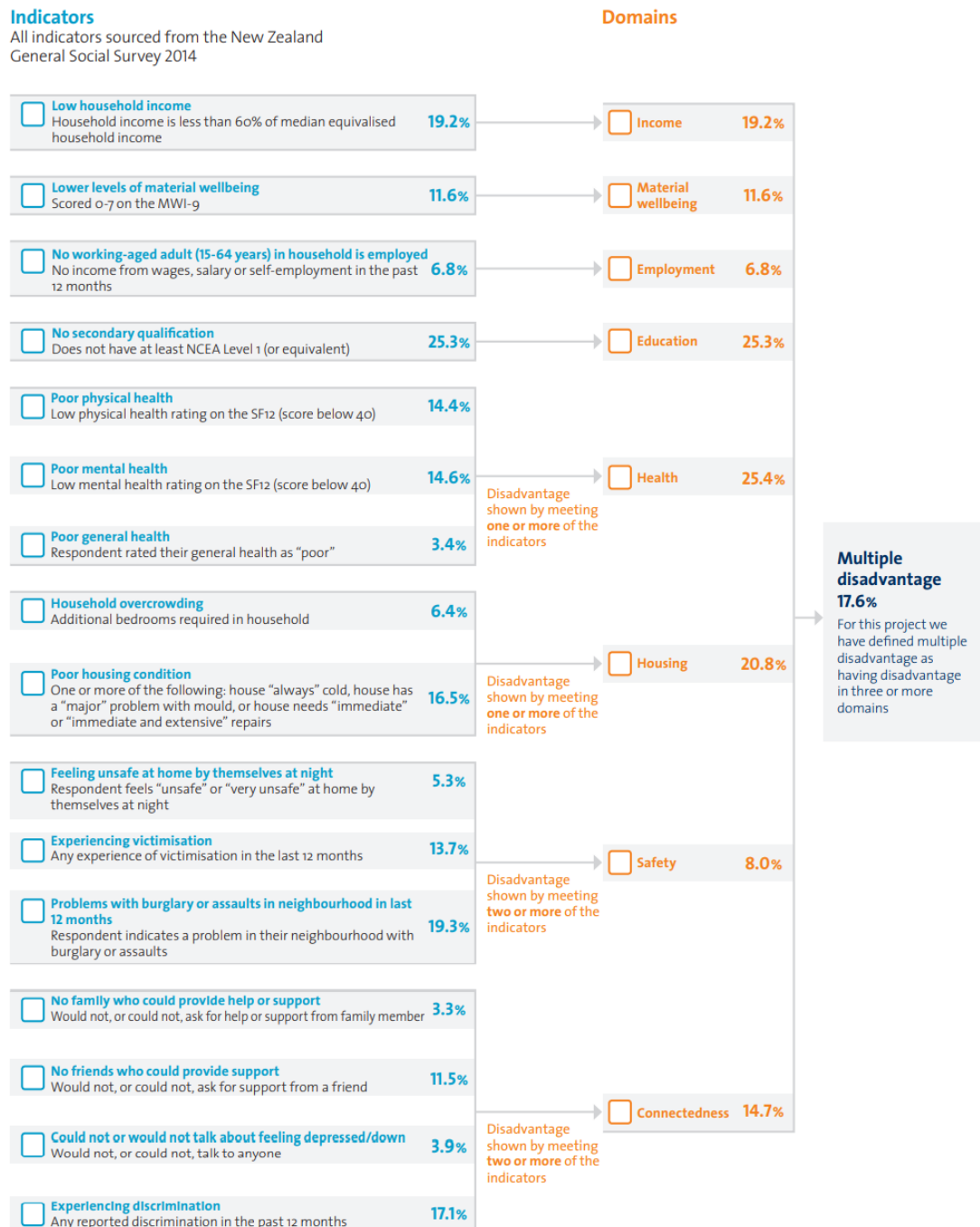
What is "Disadvantage"?

4. Disadvantage and the adjunct used in the inquiry "*a fair chance for all"* suggest a focus the *circumstances* which lead to undesired outcomes at the individual, community or society scale. This could be seen as distinct from a focus on the outcomes/impacts of disadvantage, such as poverty- although the terms disadvantage and poverty are often used interchangeably. We applaud this approach if this means that the Commission wants to take an interest in revealing the root causes of poverty and other consequences of disadvantage in Aotearoa New Zealand, by taking a systems-led approach.

5. Nevertheless, exploring disadvantage and identifying its root causes is a well-trodden path in policy, social science and of course political discourse. The Commission will need to ensure that it takes a rigorous evidence-based approach when it comes to addressing the underlying factors which determine whether every New Zealander is getting a fair chance or not. Just how it does that will be very important and is part of our response.

6. The Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit (Superu) (2017) published a detailed research programme on disadvantage in Aotearoa New Zealand. Superu defined multiple disadvantage as *"experiencing multiple difficulties or challenges across several areas of life at the same time (e.g., experiencing low material wellbeing, poor health, and poor-quality housing at the same time)".*[1] The Superu report identified a series of indicators and life domains used to identify multiple disadvantage. Based on the data collected, they calculated that at the time only 17.6% of New Zealanders experience multiple disadvantage. The report looked at multiple disadvantage across

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[1] Familes-and-Whanau-2017-Multiple-disadvantage-reportf.pdf (swa.govt.nz)

dimensions of age, family type and the incidence of several disadvantage domains. Of interest, the report concluded that:

"… while multiple disadvantage affected just 18% of the total population, it made up half (51%) of all disadvantage experienced. This shows that while multiple disadvantage is concentrated in a minority of the population, addressing it effectively would impact a much larger proportion of overall disadvantage than might have been expected."

Indicators
All indicators sourced from the New Zealand
General Social Survey 2014

Domains

Indicator	%		Domain	%
Low household income — Household income is less than 60% of median equivalised household income	19.2%	→	Income	19.2%
Lower levels of material wellbeing — Scored 0-7 on the MWI-9	11.6%	→	Material wellbeing	11.6%
No working-aged adult (15-64 years) in household is employed — No income from wages, salary or self-employment in the past 12 months	6.8%	→	Employment	6.8%
No secondary qualification — Does not have at least NCEA Level 1 (or equivalent)	25.3%	→	Education	25.3%
Poor physical health — Low physical health rating on the SF12 (score below 40)	14.4%			
Poor mental health — Low mental health rating on the SF12 (score below 40)	14.6%		Health	25.4%
Poor general health — Respondent rated their general health as "poor"	3.4%			

Disadvantage shown by meeting **one or more** of the indicators

Indicator	%		Domain	%
Household overcrowding — Additional bedrooms required in household	6.4%			
Poor housing condition — One or more of the following: house "always" cold, house has a "major" problem with mould, or house needs "immediate" or "immediate and extensive" repairs	16.5%		Housing	20.8%

Disadvantage shown by meeting **one or more** of the indicators

Indicator	%		Domain	%
Feeling unsafe at home by themselves at night — Respondent feels "unsafe" or "very unsafe" at home by themselves at night	5.3%			
Experiencing victimisation — Any experience of victimisation in the last 12 months	13.7%		Safety	8.0%
Problems with burglary or assaults in neighbourhood in last 12 months — Respondent indicates a problem in their neighbourhood with burglary or assaults	19.3%			

Disadvantage shown by meeting **two or more** of the indicators

Indicator	%		Domain	%
No family who could provide help or support — Would not, or could not, ask for help or support from family member	3.3%			
No friends who could provide support — Would not, or could not, ask for support from a friend	11.5%		Connectedness	14.7%
Could not or would not talk about feeling depressed/down — Would not, or could not, talk to anyone	3.9%			
Experiencing discrimination — Any reported discrimination in the past 12 months	17.1%			

Disadvantage shown by meeting **two or more** of the indicators

Multiple disadvantage 17.6%
For this project we have defined multiple disadvantage as having disadvantage in three or more domains

7. Some careful decisions will need to be made about the extent to which your inquiry looks at proximate and more distal (yet equally as important) causes and indicators of disadvantage. For example, the Superu analysis explores a range of mostly proximal factors from the point of view of the family unit and appears to pay less attention to wider issues which may well also play a major role. In recent years, in both Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally attention has been

paid to macro-institutional and societal factors which may have a pervasive and insidious effect on life chances at individual, whanau, community and social scales. While by no mean an exhaustive list factors which are now more commonly identified as relevant (many of which have also been raised by our manu taki) include for example institutional racism, colonisation and its persistent effects, various forms of discrimination against ethnic, social and cultural cohorts, sexism, ageism and neo-liberalism.

8. In the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the persistent impacts of colonisation and its adverse effects on Māori wellbeing are particularly relevant, as is the role of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in addressing historical injustices and on contemporary civil society[2]. While these factors are unhelpful if they are simply presented as" black box" explanations, they have a major part to play in understanding contemporary disadvantage in Aotearoa New Zealand and why it exists, so do deserve your careful attention and consideration.

9. Importantly also your inquiry will need to be conscious of the underlying frameworks and logic models its uses to inquire into the challenge, understand cause and effect and develop potential actions. We provide some thoughts on that below, but in the Aotearoa New Zealand context this also needs to include, right from the outset a Te Ao Māori worldview. When collecting and analysing evidence and assigning cause and effect, the inquiry also needs to factor into its process Mātauranga Māori and the knowledge systems which Māori bring to these important matters.

Disadvantage and Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand

10. Addressing and reducing disadvantage and in particular the poverty it can create, is at the heart of most civic and political discourse and debate around how to move towards a good society. The reduction, or event elimination of poverty is a priority from a global level down. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development[3] in its preamble states:

> *"We recognise that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development."*

> *"We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources."*

11. At a global level, there is reason for cautious optimism. The number of people in extreme (abject) poverty has fallen from nearly 1.9 billion in 1990 to about 650 million in 2018, even as the world's population in that time has considerably increased. However, at this level we are talking about poverty as defined by people living on less than US$1/day[4]. Such a metric for poverty is of limited relevance to Aotearoa New Zealand where such poverty is still rare. However, Aotearoa New Zealand experiences significant relative poverty and there is evidence that this is increasing. The Children's Commissioner (2012) noted that:

> *"Because relative poverty is less debilitating and harmful than abject poverty does not render the notion of relative poverty meaningless or inappropriate. On the contrary, we believe that the term 'poverty' accurately describes the circumstances and hardship experienced by numerous citizens, including many children, in countries like Aotearoa New Zealand."*

12. Aotearoa New Zealand has no agreed definition of poverty or official poverty measures[5]. The definition of poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand has been subject to considerable debate with

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[2] For example, refer: 171208 CPAG Whakapono Māori poverty.pdf
[3] Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development | Department of Economic and Social Affairs (un.org)
[4] www.ourworldindata.org
[5] Final-report-Solutions-to-child-poverty-evidence-for-action.pdf (occ.org.nz)

several different measures deployed. Wisely, none have used a single monetary measure as above, instead developing measures which compare the income of different cohorts to Aotearoa New Zealand medians. There has also been a growing focus on child poverty as a key focus area, not only because we all sense the injustice of youth who are derived of a decent standard of living, but because by addressing child poverty, we may be able to cause a break/discontinuity in the system and star to improve wellbeing outcomes for all Aotearoa New Zealanders. Many of the factors which are reported in relation to poverty are like those reported by Suparu and others for disadvantage.

13. In relation to income, the Child Poverty Monitor ([Adequate income | Child Poverty](#)) reports that in 2020 235,400 or 20.8% of tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand currently live in low-income households. These are households with less than 50% of the median equivalised disposable household income for the 2017/18 base financial year after housing costs. By 2028, the Government has committed to reduce the number of tamariki in low-income households to 10%. This would mean that the actual number of tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand who are lifted out of poverty, not allowing for natural increase, would need to be about 14,100 per year every year until 2028.

14. On access to essentials, the Child Poverty Monitor reports that 150,000, or 13.4% of tamariki currently live in households experiencing material hardship. By 2028, the Government has committed to reduce this to 6%. On health outcomes, tamariki living in areas with the highest deprivation scores are twice as likely to end up in hospital than tamariki in areas with the lowest deprivation scores. The most common diagnoses for tamariki hospitalised with a medical condition in the five years from 2015–2019 were diseases of the respiratory system, accounting for 37% of hospital admissions in 0–14-year-olds.

15. On housing, more than 30% of the lowest income households with tamariki spend more than half of their income on housing costs. And on food insecurity, the monitor found that 56% of tamariki whose whānau receive financial assistance are in households where there is not always enough healthy food on the table, compared to just 12% of tamariki whose whānau do not receive financial assistance.

16. Many of the above reports and sources make many recommendations on solutions to poverty and the Commission is urged to review these as part of its inquiry. We do not offer any solutions of our own at this early point in your inquiry and would prefer to offer thoughts on the approach the inquiry might take, based on our own recent experience in establishing the Waikato Wellbeing Project, and with reference to the growing body of international and local practice around social impact labs and the use of human-centred design models.

Complex Social Challenges and the Expert Planning Paradigm

"For every complex problem there is an answer which is clear, simple and wrong"[6]

17. While there are many interventions which can successfully address disadvantage at all scales, the substantive removal of disadvantage eludes most societies, regardless of political ideology. Given its persistence, disadvantage conforms to the definition of a wicked problem and its 10 dimensions,[7] as set out in Table 1.

1. **There is no definitive formulation of the problem.** It's not possible to write a well-defined statement of the problem, as can be done with an ordinary problem.
2. **Wicked problems have no stopping rule.** You can tell when you've reached a solution with an ordinary problem. With a wicked problem, the search for solutions never stops.
3. **Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false, but good or bad.** Ordinary problems have solutions that can be objectively evaluated as right or wrong. Choosing a solution to a wicked problem is largely a matter of judgment.
4. **There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.** It's possible to determine right away if a solution to an ordinary problem is working. But solutions to wicked

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[6] Attributed to H.L. Mencken

[7] https://hbr.org/2008/05/strategy-as-a-wicked-problem

18. Your inquiry will need to embrace the inherent "wickedness" of disadvantage as a challenge to productivity, the wider economy and civil society, and the likelihood that any prescription you make will be contested and uncertain. However, that should not deter you from exploring the issue, given its foundation as a basic question of concern to all of us concerned with Aotearoa New Zealand's wellbeing and future. The question is how you explore the issue.

19. On the one hand, your inquiry could operate in a traditional sense- desk based research and analysis by technical experts, with some feedback from a small number of motivated stakeholders, resulting a report which may or may not achieve anything practical. In his book "The Social Labs Revolution" Zaid Hassan reflects on this expert technical planning paradigm, which dominates the way we traditionally attempt to solve wicked problems, especially in the public policy space. He observes that dominant approaches often result in frantic alleviation of symptoms that leave underlying causes largely intact. He concludes:

> *"Dominant efforts to address our most serious challenges waste precious resources, time and talent. These planning-based approaches, so common across government, civil society and even business- represent a neo-soviet paradigm, once that is spectacularly out of step with what we now know about complexity, about systems, about networks and about how change happens…reports recommending action seem to be drowning out action. It's as if we believe that writing a report is 90% of the work"*

20. Indeed, one of the major pieces of feedback from our manu taki to your inquiry was that in relation to this topic there has been *"far too much hui and far too little doi",* and this inquiry needs to take a different approach for it to signal a break from the traditional, and largely unsuccessful approach as above.

A Different Approach?

21. Like you, the Waikato Wellbeing Project WWP is interested in addressing some of the big challenges which improve societal wellbeing. We agree with the statement on your website that *"more wellbeing is better than less, as growing productivity creates more wellbeing options for Aotearoa New Zealanders, whether that be economic, social, environmental or cultural."*[8] Our focus is on well-being as it is framed by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its 17 domains. Productivity fits well within this framework, especially SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), although it links to many other 2030 goals including:

- SDG 1- no poverty

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[8] Productivity Commission | About us

- SDG 2- zero hunger
- SDG 10- reduced inequalities

22. Like you also, the WWP is not a front-line service delivery or funding organisation, and we occupy the space before and between strategy, policy and action. Our goal is to provide greater insight into the root causes of the barriers and challenges to wellbeing and to deploy innovative approaches to achieve breakthrough and novel solutions to persistent social, cultural, economic and environmental issues.

23. While public policy, strategy, legislation and government services are extremely important elements of the toolkit for addressing wellbeing, as summarised by Hassan above, there is growing evidence that despite best intentions, these traditional technical expert approaches to solving wicked problems cannot achieve results on its own. Hassan gives these traditional approaches somewhere between a 5 and 10% chance of success. In any other field of endeavour such low-probability approaches would be quickly discarded yet they are still our dominant approach.

24. Given the persistence of disadvantage and the evidence of growing poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand, it could be argued that new approaches are desperately needed in this space as well. The way in which the Commission undertakes its inquiry and looks for new and better ways to create a fair chance for all could be the start of this process.

25. That is not to say that data, evidence and logic do not have their place- but they need to be complemented by other tools which recognise the true dynamics of wicked problems as set out above, avoid the fallacy that the root cause can be readily and easily identified remotely, and importantly that the situation can be properly diagnosed via a sterile technical assessment.

Human Centred Design

26. Many people and organisations with an interest in solving complex social challenges are adopting new ways of working- in which the precepts of technical certainty, knowing the answer and zero risk-taking are replaced with a more emergent approach to problem solving based on the ideas of complexity, emergence, experimentation and understanding fully the user/customer/citizen's lived experience of the issue.

> *"human centred designers always start from the place of not knowing the answer to the problem they're looking to solve…by starting at square one, we're forced to get out into the world and talk to the people we're looking to serve…though it may seem counterintuitive, the ambiguity of not knowing the answer actually sets up human centred designers to innovate (and) frees us to pursue and answer that we can't initially imagine."[9]*

27. Human-centred design/co-design is a process that starts with the people you're designing with and ends with new solutions that are purpose-built to suit their needs. Human-centred design is about cultivating deep empathy with the people you're designing with; generating ideas; building a bunch of prototypes; sharing what you've made together; and eventually, putting your innovative new solution out in the world.

28. Design thinking is a human-centred approach to innovation. It draws from the designer's toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success. Successful innovations rely on some element of human-centred design research while balancing other elements. Design thinking helps achieve that balance. It lets people find the sweet spot of feasibility, viability, and desirability while considering the real needs and desires of people.[10]

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[9] Patrice Martin in Design Kit
[10] Design Thinking Frequently Asked Questions… | IDEO | Design Thinking

Social Impact/Innovation Labs

29. While the Productivity Commission is directed by its legislation and the expectations of its Ministers, the fact that you have been asked to undertake an inquiry into such a broad and fundamental challenge speaks at an opportunity to do things differently, and better. If the commission were to adopt a human centred design approach for this inquiry, it could explore the possibility of becoming a valuable social impact lab for the government and Aotearoa New Zealand, as we explore and look to address some of our nation's most pressing challenges.

    "A social lab is a strategic approach toward addressing complex social challenges. As a strategy it isn't too hard to grasp. It can be stated simply. Bring together a diverse, committed team and take an experimental, prototyping-based approach to addressing challenges systematically, that is, at a root cause level. Keep going. That's it."[11]

30. The Rockefeller Foundation Social Innovation Lab Guide[12] has set out three elements which need to be addressed for a lab to be successful:

    - **First**- when present solutions do not work, we need to accept and embrace the idea that new solutions are required. As it is impossible to know what will work, we need to experiment and through prototyping, gather evidence on what would work before full implementation. There are no magic bullets, so a combination of potential approaches will be needed. The goal of a lab is to develop an adaptive change strategy that tests multiple solutions.
    - **Second**- we need to innovate the way the system behaves- changing the way the system is governed, funded and/or incentivised. This can require changes in policy and the organisations which deliver it. To do this, the challenge must be framed in a way which creates a sense of urgency and a call for change.
    - **Third** – we need to build the capacity of people and organisations to do things differently. We need to build a movement, starting with the innovators that pioneer new solutions, encouraging the early adopters to change approaches and then move on to change wider systems based on evidence of what works.

31. Just how this might look is illustrated below from the Auckland Co-design Lab, a successful public sector innovation team based in South Auckland in partnership with the Southern Initiative. It is a unique collaboration between central and local government. Set up in January 2015 the Lab was established to develop fresh ideas in response to complex social issues. The lab's aim is to use co-design principles and practice to work with, better understand and empower the people closest to the issues. A key goal of the lab was to create a space for multi-agency teams to collaborate, work alongside citizens and to support and broker innovative ideas and solutions[13].

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[11] Zaid Hassan (2014) The social Labs Revolution.
[12] 10_SILabGuide-FINAL-1.pdf (rockefellerfoundation.org) 10_SILabGuide-FINAL-1.pdf (rockefellerfoundation.org)
[13] Auckland Co-Design Lab (aucklandco-lab.nz)
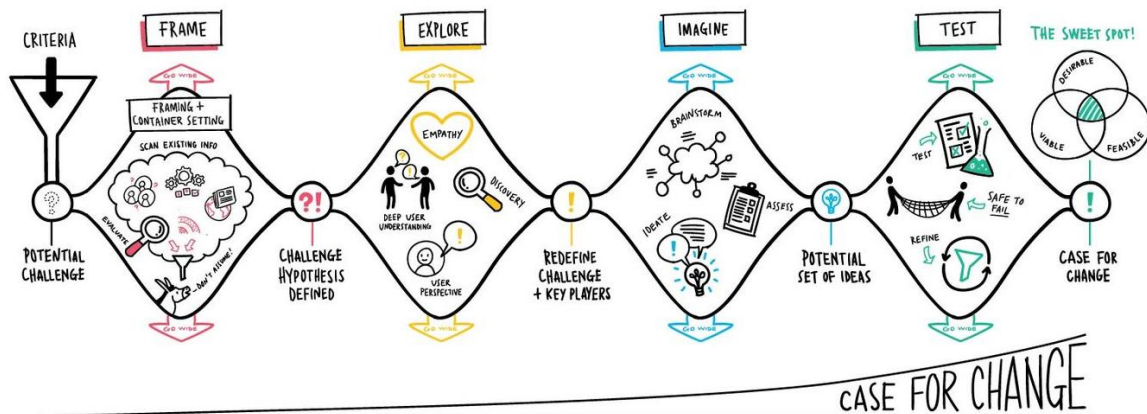
32. The results of the Co-Lab/Southern Initiative's work on complex social challenges in Southern (and now Western) Auckland can be seen in the reports published on its website (Reports — The Southern Initiative (tsi.nz). Key themes which have emerged from the TSI's work over the past decade include:

- Toxic stress is being experienced across the system, impacting on making change
- What it takes - continual need for intergenerational commitments to change
- Alignment and momentum around new ways of working
- A focus on place
- Growing the ecosystem to support Māori and Pacific enterprise and innovation
- Growing, embedding and recognising mātauranga across contemporary contexts
- Importance of social connection and enduring relationships

Taking a Place Based Approach

33. In a 2021 independent review, Professors Ingrid Burkett and Cathy Boorman from The Yunus Centre at Griffith University concluded that the TSI has modelled *"new ways of working, the reach, the depth and the systems outcomes point to a demonstration of a new future for public value creation, systemic change and the embryonic demonstration of a new kind of social contract."[14]*

34. The review also noted that by working in place, but with a systems focus:

- Makes 'systems' real. Place offers a real context in which we can not only see the impacts of systems in all their complexity, but also be able to experiment with people around how these impacts could be mitigated, or indeed how we could innovate to shift the detrimental impacts of systems;
- Enables an opportunity to see how actions intersect, how working in one part of a system interacts and ripples out to or effects other parts of the system;
- Offers an opportunity to engage with people and communities holistically rather than in service silos, making a relational approach possible;
- Enables a better appreciation of what is 'scalable' and 'replicable', or what kind of scale is appropriate for impacts. This puts a halt to unfounded assumptions that all innovations or initiatives are or should be scalable in the same way or that scaled up initiatives will automatically lead to scaled up impacts.
- Further, people are more likely to want to participate in creating systems level change in place because they have a stake in the future of co-producing their futures in place - whereas systems beyond place can seem abstract, removed and nebulous.[15]

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[14] Review+of+TSI+2020+-+Strengths+and+Opportunties (squarespace.com)

[15] ibid

35. The Waikato Wellbeing Project has adopted and adapted this approach to our context. Like the TSI, we believe that the combination of taking a systems approach, applying the best possible data, listening to the lived stories of the people who expedience the system (as opposed to consulting on a predetermined cause: effect hypothesis and/or solution) and taking an experimental and prototyping approach has the best chance of leading to insight and breakthrough- the two conditions which we think are essential to creating lasting impact. Our operating model is shown below, and we are now applying this to some of the key SDG goals and challenges in our region.
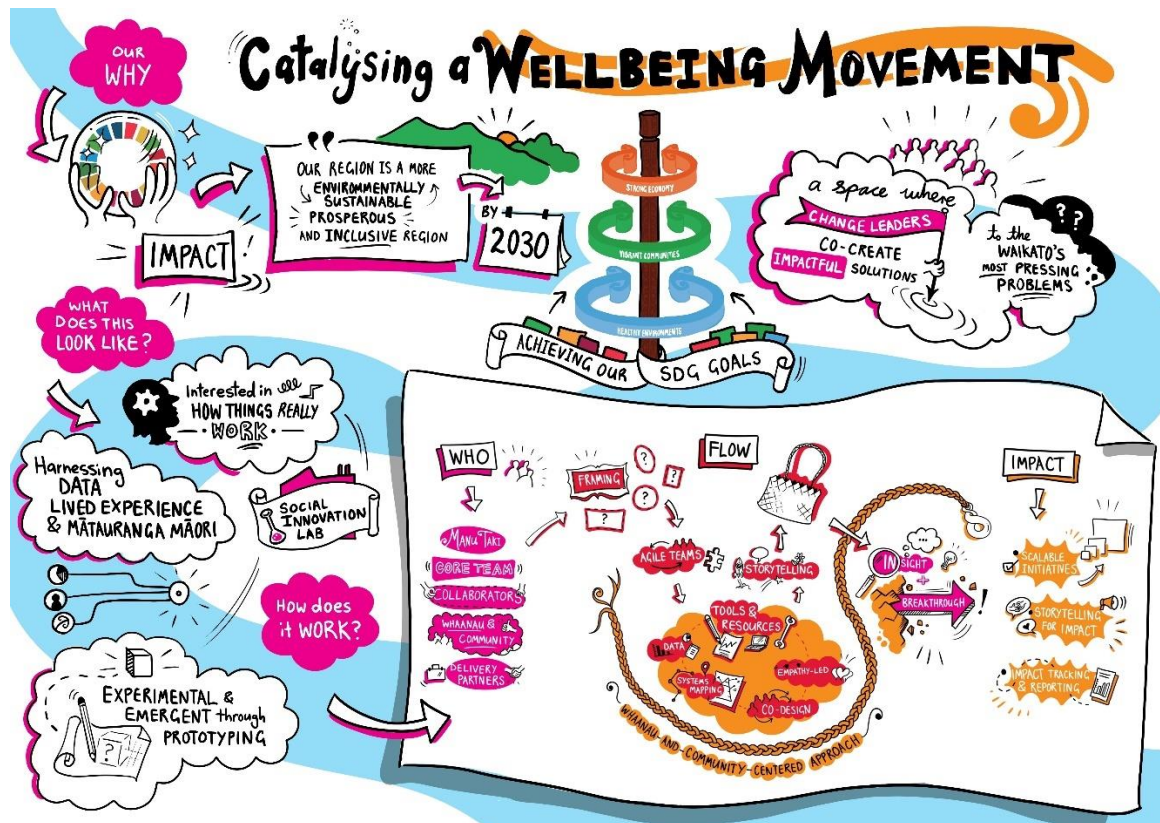
36. We are by no means promoting this approach to you as a guaranteed way to fully understand and develop universally successful approaches to solving Aotearoa New Zealand's disadvantage challenges. The whole point of this approach, as described above is that there is no certainty from it.

37. However, we believe, based on our own initial work, evidence from the TSI and other locations that these approaches are working very well in many locations in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, and represent a new and innovative way to make progress on society's most pressing sustainable development challenges.

38. The opportunity exists for the Productivity Commission to explore and test a different approach to understanding and finding potential solutions to the persistent issue of disadvantage. By taking a design-led and social labs approach, it might be possible for the commission to improve and deepen its, the government's and Aotearoa New Zealand's insights on the nature and scale of the challenge, the root causes which cause disadvantage and which encourage out current systems not to fully solve the problem and to explore with those who experience disadvantage and poverty solutions which might work.

39. Furthermore, by exploring disadvantage in place/places around Aotearoa New Zealand, the evidence suggests that you will arrive at a much deeper and richer understanding not only of the root cause and system factors which drive these issues, but you will be able to explore and develop solutions which work.

40. The Waikato Wellbeing Project stands ready to work alongside you as you finalise your Terms of Reference, your methodological approach and your inquiry. Done well, we believe this could be one of the most important pieces of work the commission produces, and we look forward to the next steps.

Harvey Brookes
Executive Director
Waikato Wellbeing Project

Attachment 1. Feedback From Manu Taki

Question 1. What are the main aspects of disadvantage that should be investigated in this inquiry?

- Systemic racism (would be a good place to focus on) - evident across various systems and is not isolated to any one sector. I've witnessed varying degrees from actual unconscious racism to outright conscious racism. Racism pervades our systems, our structures and not only impacts on our productivity but also our wellbeing and ability to prosper and thrive.
- Arts/culture can provide a strong sense of identity and belonging, connection to culture (Māori and pasifika). Can be used as an effective tool. An example being artists that have been used as first responders during crises, bringing communities together for a purpose, highlighting areas for mental health and wellbeing - can be used as a vehicle.
- Physical activity is being used as a vehicle - can also provide a strong sense of belonging - be it social, emotional plus can create a connection between communities. We're focused on actual access to physical activity opportunities instead of relying on traditional sports only. We want to build physical literacy - movement for life. Emphasis the holistic approach to wellbeing - taking into consideration whanau wellbeing and not just the individual.
- In mental health or disability, we've found that Māori and pasifika are often at the bottom of the list, full stop. We're seeing a lot of disadvantage for individuals living with mental health challenges or disabilities- for example, not being able to (easily) access housing or benefits.
- Two key areas of focus
    - addressing structural inequities (ethnicity, gender)
    - Beyond that 50% of all wellbeing are not directly related to health services, 50% - income (to be able to live with dignity) and options for education.
- Living wage is a key part of this (poverty) - this must be a basic minimum, must be a first step of focus.
- Living wage and liveable incomes for all - a need for that. When we say "all people" we must also be thinking of a liveable income for people on benefits, benefits should be enabling people to live with dignity (not just survive)
- Te Titiri o Waitangi - serious about this and what it looks like, constitutional change. Elevating Māori.
- Right now, for many 2/3 of income is going to rent - people can't afford (to live with) dignity, to have their basic necessities met for themselves and their kids. LW would enable quality of life for families.

Question 2. Where should the Commission focus its research effort?

- We've researched it to death. Numerous reports into poverty and inequalities have already been done. Where is the action?
- It's time to start another conversation and focus on what's been done and turn those into actions.
- We must take a people first approach. It's not only from an education perspective e.g. zero to a 1,000 days research, it needs to start in utero by providing support for the parents themselves. Address the family unit as well as the child. People who don't have access to education or support, in the first instance. It's time we take some action on what we already know.
- There is tonnes of research about outcomes for children (mental and wellbeing) What about the mental health of Mum - a good example of the information that is already out there - we don't need more research please, what we need is an actual plan and some action. Another piece of research and another review would be heart-breaking to see, i.e., if this is simply another piece of research for what we know to be the problem, and the solutions we know would work.

Question 3. Where should government focus its effort on finding solutions?

- Constructive input focusing research on regional efforts (like WWP) to see what's working and how these sorts of initiatives are impacting on productivity. Let's look across the country on some stuff that's happening and learn from that. Where is the Action Plan?
- It's hard to understand what is the true extent of poverty is in NZ and the true reasons behind it? Are we not being honest here? Tell me how this is getting worse, show me the data, make people understand and then they'll care/take action
- Some sectors contribute to perpetuating poverty - they feed data/outcomes into a database, which the funder then uses to tell a story to the government - with the whole idea being to continue funding for their own sustainability and survival. I don't think we're honest about the true extent of poverty. Commissioning framework and funding model contributes to that.
- As a community - we're really in trouble. Mental health system (Mike King) that's symptomatic of a range of pressure and stresses that exist across the whole of the country.
- Colonisation has had a huge impact on why poverty exists today. Market based provision of services (the shift from collective provision) more state provision of services really reversing some of these trends - had a huge impact since the 1980's. NGO - we're still competing on funding, that's the reality of our existence.
- We need to hear from the people who are suffering the most - there's work being done with org's doing advocacy and sharing the reality (wouldn't call it research though) communicate the realities and push for change together. People need to be seen as worthy of our investment (welfare system). Reimagine our welfare system!
- What is the role of workers and how they can contribute/have a voice in this process? The "Working poor" are trying to cover their needs and working 40+hr pw. We need to look at how we can regulate labour, allow business to succeed. Tools in our toolbox are not working as well as they have in the past. What about impacts of climate, pandemic, digital - we're simply not prepared for that.
- What about the pockets of the community that are largely invisible as they don't engage in the way gov agencies want them to engage i.e., digitally as access to internet/devices/technical know-how is lacking for some members of our community.
- Another example of the 'invisible' is the social housing register - 400+ families in crowded situations -they're not showing up anywhere, no voice and no visibility as they're counted as "housed" and therefore don't qualify for social housing. We need to look at the gaps and how we capture information from the community.
- Engage the wider public. Are people brave enough to really talk about it? To show leadership and talk about it. What does it mean - it's getting worse - how do we get the message across? People who are affected need to help solve the problem.