

# The Treasury

## Budget 2020 Information Release

### August 2020

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Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor  
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

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**Professor Juliet A. Gerrard FRSNZ**  
[23]

May 4 2020

**To:** Budget Ministers

**From:** Juliet Gerrard (PMCSA), Tracey McIntosh (CSA, MSD), Ian Lambie (CSA, Justice), Ian Town (CSA, MoH) and Tahu Kukutai (co-opted CSA affiliated with TPK)

**RE:** Commentary on intergenerational well-being to support Budget discussions, as requested by the Minister of Finance

#### **Key messages**

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1. There is an opportunity to place long-term transformational goals at the heart of the COVID-19 recovery from the start - how might the Government respond to the immediate crisis and invest smartly to ease the acute suffering while also ameliorating embedded inequities and chronic harms, so as to set up our our whole population to thrive and not just restore the pre-pandemic status quo?
  2. To ensure the social and economic recovery of the country, the Government will need to make a significant effort that draws on a broad and culturally informed evidence base – with a focus on what we know works, adapted to suit the current context.
  3. Our demographic changes present an economic opportunity, given the increasing proportion of our working age population who are Māori and Pacific, to lift productivity. This is vital not only to address issues of equity and fairness and give full expression to Te Tiriti, but also to lift the aspirations and productivity of all our working population, beyond our urban centres and throughout the regions.
  4. For New Zealanders to perform well they have to be healthy and well. Placing communities at the heart of the response and addressing intergenerational inequity creates opportunities for everyone.
  5. Practical steps for immediate action can be drawn from a wealth of reviews commissioned by the Government and their recommendations. In particular, we highlight relevant thinking from recent reviews of health, welfare, justice and corrections whose recommendations suggest immediate actions to address both the current crisis and long-term solutions.
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## **A) Context:**

Following our letter of April 23 (attached), a group of the departmental Chief Science Advisers (CSAs) were invited by Treasury to provide advice to Ministers on prioritising Budget proposals as part of the Government's economic response to COVID-19, with a particular focus on intergenerational wellbeing. We have not seen the set of bids, but have been briefed by Tim Ng (Chief Economist and member of our CSA Forum) on the broad themes coming through from discussions among agencies.

The impact of COVID-19 on the world<sup>1</sup> and in Aotearoa New Zealand has been profound.<sup>2</sup> To ensure the social and economic recovery of the country the Government will need to make a significant effort that draws on broad and culturally informed evidence base. The required investment also creates a generational opportunity to strengthen the economy and create a country that is more resilient to future shocks. We have a unique chance to invest in a more resilient and equitable society, empower a greater proportion of our people to flourish and create a more capable and aspirational Aotearoa New Zealand than the one that was hit by this pandemic.

The virus does not discriminate between people. However, the global evidence is clear that communities that are characterised by scarcity, deprivation and discrimination have borne the greatest burden.<sup>3</sup> The crisis has shone a bright light on the stressed parts of societies globally and we see that these communities are more vulnerable to long lasting, intergenerational harm. The societal harm from both the pandemic and the lockdown<sup>4</sup> will have a much longer tail than the virus itself.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, decisive action to go hard and go early has so far enabled us to escape a high death toll.<sup>5</sup> Māori and Pacific communities have thus far not been over represented in Aotearoa New Zealand's hospitalisation and death toll, having adopted very successful protective strategies. However, it is highly likely that the social and economic impacts of the pandemic, and our response to it, will fall disproportionately on more vulnerable parts of society, especially Māori and Pacific peoples.<sup>6,7</sup> The Government's response to COVID-19 has seen a significant number of people accessing state support for the first time, alongside those who have had longer ties with the welfare system, including those who have suffered intergenerational disadvantage. Overall, this level of support has been welcomed from a broad constituency including those with considerable social, economic and political capital. Given this, how might the Government respond to the immediate crisis and invest wisely to ease the acute suffering while also ameliorating embedded inequities and chronic harms to set up our our whole population to thrive, rather than simply aim to restore the pre-pandemic status quo?

While it would be tempting to look at Waves 1 and 2 as simply dealing with the immediate impact and leave any long-term thinking to Wave 3, there is an opportunity to place long-term transformational

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<sup>1</sup> Kets de Vries, M.F.R, What Will Life Be Like After the Pandemic? <https://knowledge.insead.edu/blog/insead-blog/what-will-life-be-like-after-the-pandemic-13886#comment-30466>

<sup>2</sup> Statistics New Zealand COVID-19 Data Portal: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/experimental/covid-19-data-portal>

<sup>3</sup> Poor social and material conditions have led to compromised health so that certain groups have suffered the impact of COVID-19 disproportionately. Early analysis of the death toll worldwide shows a significant difference between death rates in, for example, United State's African American populations, Indigenous populations and BAME populations in the UK as well as in less affluent parts of society.

<sup>4</sup> Brooks, S., Webster, R.K., Smith, L.E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G.J. (2020) The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*, 395(10227), 912-920.

<sup>5</sup> The wave of COVID-19 that has initially hit Aotearoa New Zealand came from relatively affluent travellers and our rapid response restricted spread into the wider community.

<sup>6</sup> Steyn, N., Binny, R.N., Hannah, K., Hendy, S., James, A., Kukutai, T., ... & Sporle, A. (2020). Estimated inequities in COVID-19 infection fatality rates by ethnicity for Aotearoa New Zealand. Accessed at: <https://www.tepunahamatatini.ac.nz/2020/04/17/estimated-inequities-in-covid-19-infection-fatality-rates-by-ethnicity-for-aotearoa-new-zealand/>

<sup>7</sup> Cochrane, W., & Pool, I. (2017). Māori in New Zealand's contemporary development. *Policy Quarterly*, 13, 47-54.

goals at the heart of the recovery from the start. Otherwise, we risk our immediate response putting us back on an old path that will perpetuate inequality. This is our opportunity to establish a new normal to build an economy that is productive, sustainable, and inclusive; dealing with long-term systemic issues as we heal the hurt of the immediate crisis.

***Our evolving demographics present an economic opportunity:*** By 2038, Statistics New Zealand estimate that Māori and Pacific peoples will make up 23% and 13% respectively<sup>8</sup> of our young working age population (15-39 years).<sup>9</sup> We must be well placed to optimise the dividend of these youthful populations,<sup>10</sup> particularly given the dramatic impacts that automation will have on the future of work.<sup>11</sup> System-level failures means we risk squandering a large part of this national human capital resource. For Aotearoa New Zealand to thrive as a globally distinctive, high-value and inclusive economy, these communities must flourish. The recovery provides an opportunity to accelerate strategic investment in today's tamariki and rangatahi, building on the foundations laid by the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.<sup>12</sup> This is vital not only to address issues of equity and fairness and give full expression to Te Tiriti, but also to lift the aspirations and productivity of all our working population, beyond our urban centres and throughout the regions. This focus will allow the restoration of local communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand that are productive, sustainable and socially and environmentally well.

***We are all in this together:*** The pandemic has exposed the weaknesses of an increasingly atomised and individualistic society. A collective response was required, and delivered by New Zealanders. This team spirit can be harnessed to lift our collective aspiration for a productive, sustainable, inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand. For New Zealanders to perform well they have to be healthy and well.

#### ***B) Our advice:***

When Ministers look at the proposals to fight the virus and position for recovery in Waves 1 and 2, the following might provide a useful frame to prioritise those proposals that also provide a solid platform on which to build an ambitious Wave 3. An investment portfolio which directly addresses intergenerational wellbeing and empowers individuals, whānau and communities to create an Aotearoa New Zealand in which more people thrive.

- 1. What works?** We are aware of pressures to expand existing programmes which are under strain from higher demand. Which of the proposals for expansion have an evidence base to demonstrate effectiveness? How will success of any expansion be evaluated and monitored? Do the proposals demonstrate sufficient scrutiny as to their suitability to adapt to the current situation and access from different population groups, and ways to target new needs? Are there concrete mechanisms within the proposals to adapt and adjust in response to emerging information and data on effectiveness? How will progress be monitored? Will novel data be collected as part of implementation and used to iterate operational effectiveness as the programme progresses and more is understood about the impact of COVID-19 on specific communities? Given the urgency, it is likely that expansion and reorienting existing successful

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<sup>8</sup> Ethnic projection categories are not mutually exclusive, so cannot be added. For total working age population (15-64 years) the shares are 18.3% and 10.4%

<sup>9</sup> Statistics New Zealand national ethnic projections: <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/national-labour-force-projections-2017base2068>

<sup>10</sup> Jackson, N. (2016) *The Potential Collateral Demographic Dividend*. In: Pace R., Ham-Chande R. (eds) *Demographic Dividends: Emerging Challenges and Policy Implications*. Springer.

<sup>11</sup> Prime Minister's Business Advisory Council (2019). *A future that works: Harnessing automation for a more productive and skilled New Zealand*.

<sup>12</sup> Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy: <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

programmes can answer these questions satisfactorily and more efficiently than brand new initiatives.

2. **Place communities, not individuals, at the heart of the recovery.** Communities know what works for them so involving them in the decision-making processes will yield better results.<sup>13</sup>
3. **Address the inequality long embedded in the system by:**
  - Building on the strengths of local communities.
  - Having equity at the heart of the policy development and the decision-making process.
  - Focussing on ensuring income adequacy across the board rather than fill gaps i.e. just tackling areas of recent income inadequacy precipitated by the crisis.
  - Ensuring that technologically based solutions that do not cross the ‘digital divide’ are not relied upon too much. A significant proportion of high-needs peoples do not have access to the internet<sup>14,15</sup> and apps for mental health (for example) do not target those who have the greatest need across diverse communities.
  - Tailoring the welfare response not just to the people new to the system as a result of COVID-19 but also to those already in the system, including people with high needs who will also have been affected.
  - Ensuring that policies are child-centred and are inclusive of the wellbeing of all children.
  - Māori and Pacific are the populations who are most likely to be affected by the economic recession<sup>16</sup>, are more likely to be the ‘essential workers’ leading the response on the ground, and are the fastest growing demographic and so initiatives that improve their wellbeing are to most likely have the greatest long-term impact.
  - Ensuring that the focus of the welfare system is enabling people and communities to be job-ready, not dependent on the state.

### ***C) Practical steps to take:***

To act promptly, and address the systemic issues already present but exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19, let’s build and act on the deep thinking that has already been done by this government, for example:

- **The recommendations of the Welfare Expert Advisory group (WEAG)<sup>17,18</sup>** – The foundational concept of this report was to whakamana tangata – to build and uplift the mana of all. The 42 main recommendations of the WEAG align with the aspirations of the government to mobilise a national response and to allow full participation in the social, cultural and economic life of the nation. The work recognised that too many New Zealanders live desperate lives with inadequate incomes that do not allow basic costs to be covered, let alone allow meaningful participation in

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<sup>13</sup> What came strongly during hui throughout the country for both the welfare and justice reviews (and was a feature of the hui for the Mental Health and Addiction Inquiry) was the demand for Government responses to be people-centred and not system centred. In other words, intervention should not just prop up the system or try to ameliorate or mitigate the worst parts of the system they need to have people and their collective wellbeing. It sounds simple and obvious but many proposals are about making systems work better without sufficient attention or regard to lived experience.

<sup>14</sup> Digital Inclusion Research Group. (2017). *Digital New Zealanders: The Pulse of our Nation. A report to MBIE and DIA*. Wellington, NZ.

<sup>15</sup> Grimes, A., & White, D. (2019). *Digital inclusion and wellbeing in New Zealand*. Motu Working Paper 19-17. A report to Department of Internal Affairs. Wellington, NZ: Motu Economic & Public Policy Research.

<sup>16</sup> Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (2017). *Māori in the Labour Market*, Wellington: MBIE

<sup>17</sup> Kiro, C., Asher, I., Brereton, K., Huhanna, H., McGlinchy, T., Ganesh, N., ... & McIntosh, T. (2019). *Whakamana Tangata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand*.

their communities. The lockdown has revealed these faultlines more clearly, but also has shown how deprived communities respond to the call to collective action. Evidence is clear on the negative effects of poverty on a wide range of children's outcomes. To rectify this there is a need to:

- Increase the incomes of people receiving benefit and conducting low-wage work and to significantly increase the abatement thresholds.
- Recognise that eligibility rules for welfare support do not reflect contemporary family configurations and are still based on a one-earner per household model.
- Move income support settings to be neutral on the impact of being in a relationship in the nature of a marriage.
- Prioritise a reduction of outstanding benefit debt and review recoverable hardship assistance.
- Revamp Working for Families and other tax credits by ensuring that they have universal application in improving the lives of all children.
- Subsidise housing costs for people on low incomes (in addition to raising main benefit rates to provide adequate income) and ensure the combination of changes to housing support and abatement rates to make households better off.
- Expand public housing building and draw on the lessons from the COVID-19 response in housing the homeless in times of crisis.
- Revamp active labour market, employment and training policies to make them more coherent and effective.
- Use evidence-based approaches that support young people to be learning, earning and where young people are parents, caring.
- Provide financial support to support people with health conditions and disabilities that is adequate to preserve their dignity.

The principles to guide prioritisation should be focused on the wellbeing of the collective, keeping the interests of tamariki paramount, valuing whānau and aiming for equitable outcomes.

- **Family and Sexual Violence**<sup>19</sup> – We need an evidence-based prevention plan and to resource NGO and iwi-based programmes based on high trust, high transparency models.<sup>20</sup> Children and young people (under 18) who have been abused and neglected, and who have experienced family violence, will not be helped by e-therapy and online solutions. The evidence<sup>21</sup> shows they need home-based, family-intensive interventions delivered by a skilled, culturally appropriate workforce, which can be trained in the more focused tertiary sector. Youth mentors and whānau navigators drawn from unemployed older Māori and Pasifika could be ideal.
- **Mental Health and Addictions Inquiry**<sup>22</sup> – We can anticipate an increase in the need for primary care mental health offering via GPs who have a counsellor readily available for short, problem-solving sessions, and the 1737 phone and text services which have a stress management role. However, major mental illness and intergenerational trauma requires that existing mental health services (professional, multi-disciplinary, face-to-face, culturally appropriate) must be better

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<sup>19</sup> Lambie, I. (2018). *Every four minutes: A discussion paper on preventing family violence in New Zealand*. Auckland, NZ: Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor. Accessed at: <https://www.pmcsc.ac.nz/topics/criminal-justice/>

<sup>20</sup> Most are on low trust, high accountability high compliance models which compromised the ability to use innovation and local intelligence.

<sup>21</sup> Fortson, B.L., Kleven, J., Merrick, M.T., Gilbert, L.K., & Alexander, S.P. *Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Patterson, R., Durie, M., Disley, B., Tiatia-Seath, S., & Tualamali'i, J. (2018). *He Ara Oranga: Report of the government inquiry into mental health and addiction*.

resourced and extended. At least 3% of the population suffers from serious mental distress but current services only cater for about half of them at best. There is likely to be a growth in distress in the coming year or two, including increased suicide at all ages. We will need to employ more social workers, psychologists, occupational therapists, mental health nurses, family and whānau support workers, youth specialists, and substance abuse experts.

Appropriate resourcing of on-the-ground, face-to-face residential and community addiction prevention and intervention (meth, alcohol and other drugs, gambling etc), including iwi-based, could be co-ordinated through work with the Ministry of Health Addiction team in Wellington.

- **The review of the Health and Disability System**<sup>23</sup> is especially important now that the weaknesses of a distributed approach to public health have been highlighted. A highly functioning health system is fundamental to the wellbeing agenda. Although the HDR is likely to offer sage advice and guidance, it will likely not have contemplated all the shortcomings exposed by the pandemic. Crucial strategic investments are required to build a modern fit for purpose public health system that never again places our people at risk. The following elements are of crucial importance:
  - A national public health service with world class leadership.
  - A modern integrated infectious diseases surveillance system.
  - Primary care must be re-imagined and provide equitable access for all New Zealanders with the strongest possible focus on prevention and wellness. Co-payment fee for service models are broken beyond repair.
  - Secondary and tertiary services should be fully regionalised so that buildings (hospitals) are not the focus: put patient-centred care at the centre, ensuring equitable access and outcomes.
  - Transformation requires an agile, high-quality health data infrastructure that is equity-focused, drives continuous improvement and accountability, and is co-designed with communities to optimise transparency and trust. This is particularly important for Māori and other groups who face ongoing discrimination in the health system.
- **Draw on the evidence base provided in recent Justice reviews.**<sup>24,25</sup> This is especially important with weaknesses in the court and the prison system having been exposed by this new stress on the justice system.<sup>26</sup> There is a need to establish a Mana Ōrite (equal power) governance model under which Māori and Crown agencies share in justice sector decision making. Greater transfer of power and resources to Māori communities will enable the design and development of Māori led responses to tamariki and whānau wellbeing. During the lockdown, a backlog of thousands of cases that would normally have been processed will now jam up the District and Family Court systems for years. Processing them in the usual slow court way with lawyers will do harm; we need to expedite remand reform and clearing the backlog of cases by intentionally targeting this as a problem to be solved, with adequate resources of talented lawyers, cultural and community leaders, justice and Correction innovators.

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<sup>23</sup> Health and Disability System Review. 2019. *Health and Disability System Review - Interim Report. Hauora Manaaki ki Aotearoa Whānui – Pūrongo mō Tēnei Wā*. Wellington: HDSR.

<sup>24</sup> Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora. (2019). *He Waka Roimata: Transforming Our Criminal Justice System* (No. 1). Wellington: Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora: The Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group.

<sup>25</sup> Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora. (2019). *Turuki! Turuki! Move Together* (No. 2). Wellington: Te Uepū Hāpai i te Ora: The Safe and Effective Justice Advisory Group.

<sup>26</sup> Establish a Mana Ōrite (equal power) governance model under which Māori and Crown agencies share in justice sector decision-making, as recommended by Ināia Tonu Nei;<sup>2</sup> (ii) transfer power and resources to Māori communities so they can design and develop Māori-led responses to offending, and to tamariki and whānau well-being; (iii) make tikanga Māori and te ao Māori values central to the operation of the justice system.



- **Draw on Corrections reviews.**<sup>27</sup> Continue to implement kaupapa Māori strategy and resource more mental health and neurodisability staff in our courtrooms and prisons. We must improve how the remand population is assessed, treated and resourced to stop offending – e.g. need to upscale the High Impact Innovation Teams from the Department of Corrections, which is an evidence-based, wraparound approach to sorting out the housing needs, employment and health issues of Corrections-involved people (remand, release, pre-sentencing etc.).
- **Supporting and scaling up Māori-led initiatives** which have already demonstrated success, e.g. those aimed at accelerating Māori participation and leadership in STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths).<sup>28</sup>
- **Leverage identified strengths with the Māori Economy**<sup>29</sup> to continue the drive towards a high-value, globally distinctively indigenous sector that has intergenerational and environmental wellbeing at its core.
- **Exploring how successful work ready programmes developed and delivered by Whānau Ora collectives, iwi and urban Māori providers**<sup>30</sup> can be scaled and extended.
- **A focus on building capability in the Tertiary Sector.** COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerabilities of our tertiary sector which has become dependent on income from international students and outdated business models. The recovery represents an opportunity to reimagine the sector and hardwire tertiary programmes to support our recovering economy. For example, we could:
  - Fast forward the NZ Institute of Skills and Technology and ramp up all trades and vocational training linked to new infrastructure projects.
  - Seize the opportunity to nurture local talent in our Universities and build a more diverse set of local graduates, to fill the gap left by international students.

#### **D) Ongoing engagement:**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. As outlined in our earlier letter, we are very happy to draw on the wider CSA network to address other issues, e.g. the move towards a carbon zero economy and a focus on the environment, as Ministers move to consider further investment in Wave 3.

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<sup>27</sup> Department of Corrections. (2019). *Hōkai Rangī: Ara Poutama Aotearoa Strategy | 2019–2024*. Wellington: Department of Corrections.

<sup>28</sup> Notes of the accelerating Māori in STEAM hui, 11<sup>th</sup> December 2019. Accessed at: <https://www.pmcsa.ac.nz/2020/02/14/accelerating-rangatahi-maori/>

<sup>29</sup> Te Puni Kōkiri (2013). *Māori Economy Report*. Te Ōhanga Māori 2013. Wellington: TPK.; Orr, Adrian (2019). *Emerging challenges and lessons from the Māori economic renaissance*. Accessed at: <https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/-/media/ReserveBank/Files/Publications/Speeches/2019/speech2019-09-27.pdf?revision=75976566-d7b9-44a0-9d6b-94a876a96a00>

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Ngāti Whātua Ōrakei 'Ready for work' programme and Ngai Tahu's 'He Toki' pre-trade training programme.