



PARENTS OF VISION IMPAIRED (NZ) INC

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Providing a community to support parents of children with vision impairments

13 October 2022

To: New Zealand Productivity Commission
PO Box 8036
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

Phone: 04 817 9520

Re: A fair chance for all: Breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage

Via email to info@productivity.govt.nz

Tēnā koutou,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit on the Productivity Commission's Report, *A fair chance for all: breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage*.

I am more than happy to speak further with the Commission if required.

Ngā mihi,

Rebekah Graham
National Executive Officer
Parents of Vision Impaired (NZ) Inc
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About Parents of Vision Impaired

Parents of Vision Impaired (PVI) is a registered charity which supports parents who have blind, deafblind, low vision, or vision-impaired children. There is no cost to enrol and we provide a supportive community of parents who are overcoming challenges every day. Our current membership is at 1300 members, with close to 800 email subscribers.

PVI offers parents advice, information, and opportunities to meet other parents. We publish a quarterly newsletter (eVision) and have a members-only Facebook page for families and whānau to share information and to network. We run an annual conference and AGM which allows parents and whānau to get together face to face for a longer time to talk, listen and learn in a social setting.

PVI takes an active part in the disability sector through making sure that the voice of visually impaired children and their parents is heard in consultations with government, schools, local councils, and other organisations.

Summary

Overall, Parents of Vision Impaired NZ (PVI) supports the interim findings in the *A fair chance for all* report.

The ideas presented in the report appear well thought through and are carefully considered. It is clear to us from reading the report the benefits to disabled persons and their families and whānau.

The systems level thinking and overall approach to persistent disadvantage creates a clear understanding of the ways in which various components (such as disability and income levels, for example) intersect.

Consultation Questions and Responses

Concepts used to guide the inquiry (Chapter 2)

We have built off the work of He Ara Waiora (a tikanga Māori wellbeing framework), the Treasury's Living Standards Framework and the Pacific Wellbeing Strategy for thinking about wellbeing.

Do you see any gaps in how we are thinking about wellbeing and persistent disadvantage? What are these gaps?

PVI appreciates the focus on thriving throughout the report. We do not see any obvious gaps in the thinking and frameworks utilised.

Measuring disadvantage (Chapter 3)

We measure disadvantage across three domains:

- Left out (exclusion or lacking identity, belonging and connection)
- Doing without (deprivation/material hardship or lacking aspiration and capability)
- Income poor (income poverty or lacking the ability to grow prosperity)

Where disadvantage in one or more of those domains is ongoing, for two years or more, we define that as “persistent” disadvantage.

Is there any aspect of disadvantage or persistent disadvantage that has not been captured by our definitions and proposed measurement?

It is clear that the Productivity Commission has given careful thought and consideration to measuring disadvantage. PVI appreciates that the definition of disadvantage includes more than income poverty. We can see where our families who face disadvantage fit within this definition. We especially appreciate the move away from merely listing groups that typically face disadvantage.

System barriers (Chapter 5)

The four barriers we identify are part of the reason why previous attempts to address inequalities or realise wellbeing for all have not been fully realised (see finding F5.6 in the interim report). These barriers are:

- Power imbalances
- Discrimination and the ongoing impact of colonisation
- Siloed and fragmented government
- Short-termism and status quo bias

Do the barriers we have identified match your experience? What would you add or remove?

PVI agrees with the barriers identified in the interim report. There is such a need for our families who operate within the disability sector for approaches to disadvantage to be long-term. So many of our families are tired of piece-meal half-assed approaches that “tinker at the edges” and don’t address the challenges and barriers they and their disabled child face.

System shifts (Chapter 6)

Our recommendations are based around the notion of systems change. We are proposing four system shifts to achieve greater and faster impact on breaking the cycle of persistent disadvantage.

- Re-think our macro-level system settings to better prioritise equity, wellbeing and social inclusion.
- Re-focus public accountability settings to activate a wellbeing approach.
- Broaden and embed a wellbeing approach across policymaking and funding frameworks.
- Enable system learning through monitoring and evaluation.

**What do you think needs to be done to support these shifts and activate change?
Is there anything missing?**

The report itself is quite high level. Moving into the next steps to achieve this will require a great deal of thought regarding specific actions and activities. There is much room for local grass-roots type groups to contribute to the reports aims. However, this will take some form of consistent/on-going funding.

Considering the disability sector, positive change has been achieved through the following mechanisms:

1. A whole-of-government commitment to disabled people. The UNCRPD and the IMM provide a mechanism for holding the whole-of-government to account for progress and for successes and failures.
2. Clear goals with achievable and measurable targets
3. Legislation on accessibility
4. Awareness raising around the importance and value of accessibility
5. Commitment to grass-roots groups, including funding for activities that develop leadership and capacity in the disability space
6. Activists who consistently challenge societal ideas around disability

Change takes time. That said, the most effective mechanism for achieving change has been having clear reporting structures, accountability mechanisms, and a whole-of-government commitment to improvement.

There have been many reports in the area of persistent disadvantage. Having these reports produced has not necessarily resulted in meaningful change. There needs to be a mechanism for holding institutions, groups, and organisations to account for their successes and/or failures to achieve recommendations in this area.