

Professor Boyd Swinburn
MB ChB, MD, FRACP, FNZCPHM

Professor of Population Nutrition and Global Health
University of Auckland

Honorary Professor
Deakin University, Melbourne

21/08/2021

Productivity Commission A Fair Chance for All Inquiry



Te Whare Wānanga o Tamaki Makaurau

School of Population Health
Building 507, Park Ave Grafton
Auckland, New Zealand
Telephone 64 9 923 9135
Mobile 022 167 9636
Email: boyd.swinburn@auckland.ac.nz

The University of Auckland
Private Bag 92019
Auckland 1142, New Zealand



Global Obesity Centre (GLOBE), a
WHO Collaborating Centre for
Obesity Prevention
Deakin University, Australia

Kia ora

Re: Fair Chance for All Inquiry

I am submitting to this Inquiry as a Professor of Population Nutrition and Global Health at the University of Auckland and Research Director of the Growing up in New Zealand (GUiNZ) longitudinal study of NZ children. The GUiNZ study has considerable evidence to contribute to the Inquiry and we would be very happy to discuss this further. Details of the how the study could contribute have been forwarded separately to Geoff Simmons and Jo Smith.

My responses to the questions posed by the Commission's consultation are below:

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

Focus on the policy and structural drivers of the inequities creating persistent disadvantage. The background paper notes that the late 80s and early 90s saw a marked escalation in poverty and inequalities in NZ. This should be the focus of the inquiries - how to counteract those policy and ideology-driven structural changes which persist today. The central framework should NOT be at the individual level (even though the He Ara Wairoa model is attractive for its holistic view, it is still very individual-centric). The central framework that the Commission develops needs to have a systems focus - what are the feedback loops which are holding disadvantage in place? The focus needs to be on the ideology/mind-sets/beliefs which lead to the policies which lead to the structures and practices which trap people in disadvantage. If there is no systems thinking at the core of this systemic problem there can be no hope of understanding this as a 'wicked problem' which needs solutions to reverse the underlying causes of the problem. Dive into the mind-sets, policies and practices of the 1980s 1990s to start the systems map of the problems we face today.

2. Where should the Commission focus its research effort?

- a. Identify the domains which trap people in persistent disadvantage eg housing, welfare payments, mental health, prison terms etc. Longitudinal studies like Growing Up in NZ will be good for this.
- b. Create systems maps (cause and effect models) looking for the structural and policy factors which create the feedback loops holding persistent disadvantage in place. Group Model Building to create Causal Loop Diagrams would be good for this.
- c. Identify the mind-sets/policies/structural changes which would break or counter the key feedback loops. It may even be possible to create some quantitative System Dynamic models from #2 so that various policy scenarios can be run.

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

A new narrative is needed. The neo-liberal narrative of small government, economic efficiencies, business-knows-best, deregulation, dole-bludgers, personal responsibility etc led us into the causes of disadvantage, we need a new narrative (?from te ao Maori) to lead us out.

As noted above, the GUINZ team would be very keen to support the Productivity Commission in this Inquiry through longitudinal data analyses to help answer key questions that the Commission has about persistent disadvantage.

Kind Regards



Boyd Swinburn