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SocialLink Tauranga Moana is a registered charity based at The Kollektive in 17th Avenue, Tauranga. It aims to support “a thriving social and community sector improving Western Bay of Plenty communities” through research, innovation, collaboration, information, networking and advocacy.

Submission to The Productivity Commission on Scoping the Terms of Reference for an Inquiry into Breaking the Cycle of Persistent Disadvantage

Suggestions in this submission draw on published evidence, our own experience as an umbrella group supporting the social service sector in this region and locally based research, experience and knowledge from providers with whom we have consulted.

We appreciate the Productivity Commission’s consultation on terms of reference for its inquiry and the opportunity to participate.

Enhancing mana of people

SocialLink supports the Commission’s emphasis on drawing on He Ara Waiora, a waiora framework built on te Ao Māori knowledge and perspectives of wellbeing. The Commission’s document ‘A fair chance for all’ highlights four aspects of mana under He Ara Waiora which the Commission views as relevant in helping people thrive:

- A strong sense of identity (mana tuko iho)
- People’s participation and connection within their communities (mana tautuutu)
- The capability to decide on their aspirations and realise them in the context of their own circumstances (mana āheinga)
- The power to grow sustainable, intergenerational prosperity (mana whanake)

We acknowledge the value of the Commission’s view that these four aspects of mana underpin approaches to addressing persistent disadvantage and that such valuing of all people is vital if we are to overcome growing disparity.

Other points we wish to make are below.

1. Where should the Commission focus its research effort?

We believe there is already sufficient evidence, knowledge and research to identify and outline key ways forward in reducing persistent disadvantage and that what is really needed urgently is a coherent and integrated planned approach across communities, NGOs, private sector organisations, local government and national government agencies.

We suggest the Productivity Commission:

a) Draws on existing research:

- Findings and recommendations of existing research and reviews completed as part of commissions and reviews eg He Ara Oranga Report of the Government Inquiry into Mental Health and Addiction;
- Report of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG);
- Research on Child Poverty Action Group website www.cpag.org.nz
- Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit reports and research <https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-policy/social-policy-parliamentary-unit>
- Reports of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse, such as Tāwharautia: Pārongo o te Wā
- Community research and observations to help inform local planning and efforts to reduce disadvantage. Sources of community research and insight include <https://communityresearch.org.nz/> which curates a wide range of research.
- There is also research generated through territorial local authorities and community groups which provide insights into elements of persistent disadvantage. Examples include the complex factors leading to homelessness, see the Western Bay of Plenty Homelessness Providers' Network's report When the Dominos Start to Fall: Stories of Homelessness <https://www.tauranga.govt.nz/Portals/0/data/community/homelessness/stories-of-homelessness-when-the-dominos-start-to-fall.pdf> A second example of community organisations generating research and insight into these issues is the Christchurch based Beneficiary Advisory service. It found many beneficiaries did not understand they could appeal Ministry of Social Development decisions to cut entitlements. See <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/448775/benefit-sanctions-study-reveals-many-unaware-cuts-can-be-challenged> This research indicates that changes are needed to the ways government services are provided, which has also been highlighted by the Welfare Expert Advisor Group and others.
- There is also the broad array of expertise, research and analysis in academic circles to draw on. Just some examples include Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, Victoria University of Wellington; National Centre for Lifecourse Research, University of Otago; Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga Māori Centre of Research Excellence, University of Auckland; AUT Migrant and Refugee Research Centre; Koi Tū The Centre for Informed Futures, University of Auckland; Public Policy Institute, University of Auckland; Pacific Health Unit, University of Auckland, Pacific Research and Policy Centre, Massey University; SHORE and Whariki Research Centre, Massey University.

We suggest that there will be common themes and indications for the ways forward from these sources.

b) Considers the impact of intersectionality on persistent disadvantage:

- Research and thinking on the concept of intersectionality; which, broadly, maintains that gender, race, age, (dis)ability, ethnicity, class, sexuality and similar phenomena can't be analysed in isolation but "signal an intersecting constellation of power relationships that produce unequal material realities and distinctive social experiences for individuals and

groups positioned within them.”¹. As Maroto et al put it in discussing the economic insecurity of disadvantage: “Disability intersects with race and gender to expand the accumulation of disadvantage, shaping everything from educational attainment to the kinds of jobs people have, the neighbourhoods in which they live, their access to credit markets and social services, and their health over their life course... there is compelling evidence of the ways in which stereotypes, attitudes, and beliefs based on the intersection of multiple social categories contribute to inequality, marginalization, and disadvantage.”²

2. Need for more local, granulated official data available for local regions and communities to use.

Local communities need better access to local official data in planning and monitoring initiatives that address disadvantage. We believe the Productivity Commission has a role in encouraging this to occur.

A lot of data is collected in Aotearoa New Zealand by government and other agencies and is available through the Integrated Data Infrastructure database or through ministries such as MSD.

Regional level data, eg for the whole of the Bay of Plenty area, is far too broad to be of help for the diverse towns, cities and rural communities wanting good local information for situational analysis, planning and development, gaining insights into issues, measuring and describing trends and evaluating initiatives.

The ability to get more granulated administrative data at territorial authority, Statistical Area 2 or meshblock level or at Statistical Area 1 level would be very helpful for local agencies.

It would also be helpful to have more data collation, analysis and extraction expertise available at a local level.

3. Ways Forward

We suggest a focus on reducing impediments to collective and structural action on breaking the persistent disadvantage cycle is important, to help us as a society decide on a clear approach and foster support for it.

To reduce persistent disadvantage we need broad interlinked action. One way to think about this is to draw on the five approaches of the internationally recognised World Health Organisation’s Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. This offers a simple framework that can be adapted. While there are many models, the Ottawa Charter is valuable because of its

¹ Collins, PH and Chepp, V. (2013), part of a working definition of intersectionality, quoted pg 42 in Joy, E (2019) “You cannot take it with you”: Reflections on Intersectionality and Social Work, Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work, Vol 31 (1), pp 42-48.

² Maroto, M Pettinicchio, D Patterson, A (2019) Hierarchies of Categorical Disadvantage: Economic Insecurity at the Intersection of Disability, Gender and Race. Gender & Society, Vol 33(1) pp 64-93.

interlinked principles which all need to be enacted through initiatives to work on entrenched problems.

Five broad action areas for health promotion were identified in the Charter which have applicability to dealing with issues such as persistent disadvantage.

- Building healthy public policy
- Creating supportive environments
- Strengthening community action
- Developing personal skills
- Re-orienting health care services toward prevention of illness and promotion of health

This fifth action point speaks to the need for government and other agencies to be oriented towards enablement of individual and community agency rather than making it hard for people to thrive. A small example of re-orientation would be the Ministry of Social Development proactively ensuring all people get the benefits they are entitled to.

4. We suggest the main areas for focus for the inquiry include:

- Understanding and tackling how the intersection of multiple forms of disadvantage can compound and exacerbate inequity and make it much more likely to persist.
- Reducing inequities for Māori that have been well documented.
- Supporting parents and caregivers to set children up to have a good start in life.
- Improving housing, food security and access; education and employment access for people that are disadvantaged.
- Reducing siloed thinking and encourage integrated bold action within national and local government on this issue.
- Using and enhancing the capacity, knowledge, wisdom and ability of local communities and organisations around the country that are working with and on persistent disadvantage.