



27 August 2021

New Zealand Productivity Commission
PO Box 8036
Wellington 6143

A fair chance for all - breaking the disadvantage cycle
Scoping the Terms of Reference for an Inquiry
By Email: info@productivity.govt.nz

Thank you for the opportunity to offer our views on the scope of the Terms of Reference for a new inquiry into the drivers of persistent disadvantage within people's lifetimes and across generations.

Who we are:

ComVoices is a network of 23 peak bodies working nationally across the community and voluntary sector. We amplify the voices of Aotearoa's community sector to influence decision-makers. Our vision is confident, connected communities served by a valued and collaborative community sector. We promote the value that community and voluntary sector organisations add to Aotearoa New Zealand's economic and social wellbeing. We provide a collaborative platform so that members of ComVoices can encourage the development of a policy and regulatory environment that is supportive of sector organisations and their communities and can provide effective responses to the New Zealand Government on emerging issues.

This submission was developed with support and input from our members and reflects the views from a broad section of the community and voluntary sector. A list of members endorsing this submission can be found at the end of this document.

We also support individual submissions made by some of our members and their networks drawing on specific experiences and expertise relating to the relationship between wellbeing and housing, mental health and addiction, and child poverty for example. We have drawn on issues here that are of relevance across the wider community and voluntary sector.

Using a wellbeing framework

ComVoices supports the Productivity Commission's (the Commission) emphasis on drawing on He Ara Waiora, a waiora framework built on te ao Māori knowledge and perspectives of wellbeing.

We acknowledge the value of the Commission's view that the four aspects of mana underpin approaches to addressing persistent disadvantage for all people.

We believe that the Sustainable Development Goals framework, which the New Zealand Government endorsed in 2015¹, can further complement He Ara Waiora in providing a holistic and

¹ [Sustainable Development Goals | New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(mfat.govt.nz\)](https://www.mfat.govt.nz/en/about-mfat/our-work/our-work-areas/sustainable-development-goals/)

integrated approach in exploring wellbeing through balancing social, economic and environmental sustainability, with a key focus on leaving no one behind.

Where should the Commission focus its research effort?

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

We suggest the Productivity Commission draws on the following sources to identify common themes and indicators for the ways forward:

- 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](#)
- 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 community research
- Research generated through territorial local authorities and community organisations which provide insights into elements of persistent disadvantage. Examples include the [Western Bay of Plenty Homelessness Providers' Network's report When the Dominos Start to Fall: Stories of Homelessness](#) and this [Christchurch-based research](#) indicating that changes are needed to the ways government services are provided, which has also been highlighted by the Welfare Expert Advisor Group and others
- The Human Rights Commission's guidelines on housing as a human right – [Framework Guidelines on the Right to a Decent Home in Aotearoa](#)
- Research on [Institutional Racism](#) and [Te Tiriti based Futures](#).
- There is also a broad array of expertise and research and analysis in academic circles to use.

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 collected in Aotearoa New Zealand by government and other agencies is only available through the Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) database or through ministries such as MSD. This limits access to only government officials or academics. It does not allow wider and more transparent access to enable civil society to provide input and solutions to complex problems.

Regional level data 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, as well as have more data collation, analysis and extraction expertise available at a local level would be very helpful.

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

- Reduce inequities for Māori that have been well documented
- Reduce inequities for Pacific communities, people with disabilities, ethnic communities and other marginalised groups
- Improve housing, education and employment access for people that are disadvantaged
- Reduce siloed thinking and encourage integrated bold action within national and local government on this issue
- Being clear about how government is playing a part in disadvantages - acknowledging how Crown policies have been complicit in, and contributed to, persistent disadvantage for Māori
- Use and enhance the capacity, knowledge, wisdom and ability of local communities and community and voluntary organisations around the country that are working with and on persistent disadvantage.

Furthermore, we recommend the Inquiry should examine how the incorporation of Aotearoa New Zealand's international human rights agreements into domestic legislation and how emphasizing human rights practices in our law and across our public service could mitigate persistent disadvantage.

Various New Zealand governments have entered into a number of international human rights agreements including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its companion the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and other non-binding agreements such as the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. However, there remains an absence of explicit human rights structures and practices in our law and across our public sector. The development of enforcement mechanisms and the improvement in public awareness within Aotearoa remain a work in progress. Poverty, child poverty, the marginalisation of disabled peoples and communities and our persistent failures to meet their needs in a way that promotes, respects and fulfils their right to live in dignity, and their associated human rights. All reflect dimensions of persistent disadvantage which could be improved through the implementation of human rights agreements already entered into.

ComVoices also recommends that the Inquiry includes a thorough explanation of how its recommendations can be implemented. We note that reports, such as the 2019 Welfare Expert Advisory Group report, have all produced impactful recommendations but have often failed to be implemented in a consistent manner. Specifically, we believe it would be beneficial to include a roadmap for the implementation of the recommendations within the Terms of Reference to ensure the Inquiry results in substantive, widespread adoption, implementation and monitoring.

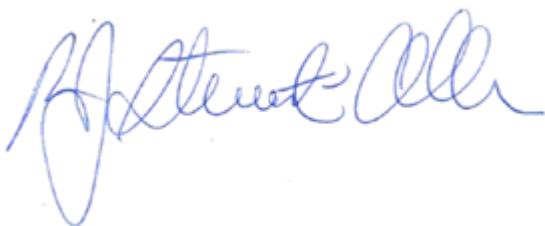
The strength of the community and voluntary sector

The community and voluntary sector will be an important source for the Inquiry. In our sector, organisations work together in innovative ways to reduce the effects of disadvantages. They understand the issues which affect people experiencing persistent disadvantages, with a large portion of the workforce being people with lived experience in their fields. Many organisations are working across social sectors, such as employment, education and housing, as well as working on other social determinants of health. If the inquiry is looking to understand the nuances of persistent disadvantage it must engage with the community and voluntary sector.

The effects of persistent disadvantage on Māori are well known. Recognising and working with Tangata whenua leadership is paramount to further understanding these effects and finding solutions. Reaching out to Kaupapa Māori organisations is key to understanding the connection between wellbeing and persistent disadvantages experienced by Māori.

We thank the Productivity Commission for bringing forward this opportunity to consult on the scope of the Inquiry while it is in its formative stage. As a network of peak bodies we are committed to and are available to engage in the Inquiry's next phase – please get in touch with me at any stage.

Kind regards



Rochelle Stewart-Allen
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This submission is endorsed by:

Age Concern New Zealand
Ara Taiohi
Birthright New Zealand
Community Housing Aotearoa
Community Networks Aotearoa
Community Research
Hui E! Community Aotearoa
New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services
Platform Trust
Presbyterian Support NZ
SocialLink
Social Service Providers Aotearoa
Volunteering New Zealand