



New Zealand Productivity Commission  
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Wellington

## More Effective Social Services Issues Paper October 2014

Wesley Community Action (WCA) has the following general comments in response to the Commissions Questions. Rather than answering all 54 questions, we have focused the themes which we believe are key to improving the.

WCA supports the Commissions decision to include Health and Education in the description of social service providers. There has been no advantage in separating these three key sectors as all contribute to the well being of New Zealanders

WCA is not supportive of a one size fits all approach to improving the social service sector. The diversity of individuals, communities and needs is such that we require a similar diversity of supports available.

### Q 1- 9

Wesley Community Action believes the key issues impacting on wellbeing are inequity – including financial, educational and the inability to access services needed at the right time, and poverty. The gap between those who are coping and those who are not is growing each year as is the gap between the richest and the poorest. We have seen a new class in the last few years- the working poor who are unable to cope despite being in full time employment.

Partnerships with private businesses and/or philanthropic groups are critical to funding those areas that government – central or local chose not to support. This includes work with “Hard to Reach” communities (Gangs etc) where a zero tolerance and engagement approach by Government does not support innovative or community led work in this area. The barriers to this include social services having the capacity and ability to promote externally and develop those links where most of this expertise lies within the private businesses

### Q 9 - 19

A single key action that Wesley Community Action believes can be taken to improve outcomes for those people relying on social services and therefore lead to the best possible improvement in the wellbeing of New Zealanders is to meaningfully engage with those people they are supporting on the issues most concerning those experiencing them.

Wesley Community Action uses the Partners for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS)<sup>1</sup> to address these imbalances and to collect data on both client and organisational effectiveness and efficiencies. This system, designed by Drs Scott Millar and Barry Duncan measure the key predictors of

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<sup>1</sup> Heart and Soul of Change.com

both engagement and outcome in real time and has seven times the impact over model and technique<sup>2</sup> on outcomes. This system is used alongside existing models techniques and theories and allows each worker with each Whanau/individual to ensure that the work they are doing together is of benefit and if not to adapt the work and style. This ensures that families and individuals are included at all points of service design and delivery

Social Services, by their nature, are relational services. Every service will be convinced they are providing the right service to the right people, but there is very little proof and no local research to support this. PCOMS provides the quality framework that allows this to occur, whilst supporting best outcomes for those people.

Wesley Community Action is supportive of a Community and Client Led approach to commissioning and funding solutions. Recognising that some services need to be provided centrally (Child Protection, Health, Housing) there should be room for additional flexibility at a community and client level to tailor services to meet individual needs.

Wesley Community Action agrees that a key focus should be on increased client outcomes however advise caution if these outcomes have been imposed on clients or communities by others. Wesley Community Action is supportive of service providers developing capacity to increase their capacity and confidence in collecting and analysing data to focus on outcomes. A key way of doing this is investing in the PCOMS system.

#### **Q 20-24**

By nature, most government contracts restrict the opportunity to innovate as the reporting requirement tends to lead the service delivery- leaving no room for innovation. An example is Family Start- aimed to engage those Whanau most at risk of poor outcomes, yet there is no flexibility in the manner or number of visits by a Whanau worker. The lack of flexibility and lack of understanding the individual issues of each Whanau means a one size fits all approach which is risk adverse and thereby restricting innovative opportunities.

#### **Q 24-33**

Wesley Community Action does not have a comment on contestable funding opportunities.

#### **Q 33- 39**

Government should engage with those people best able to comment on services-primarily the service users. These voices are typically absent from consultation and decision making processes. Zero tolerance or zero engagement policies and practices only serve to further alienate those most needed at the table. There are good examples of organisations (including Wesley Community Action) who are working alongside these groups and could assist in supporting their voices being heard.

#### **Q 43-50**

The Partners for Change Outcome Measurement System as outlined in Q 9-19 would address the majority of the questions under this grouping. As the only consumer rated outcome management system that is empirically validated by four Randomised Clinical Trials it encompasses both evidence based practice and practice based evidence. Wesley Community Action supports the use of a process such as this to capture and report on outcomes whilst benefiting the client as well.

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<sup>2</sup> The Partners for Change Outcome Management System (PCOMS):The Heart and Soul of Change Project **Barry L. Duncan** Canadian Psychology © 2012 Canadian Psychological Association 2012, Vol. 53, No. 2, 93–104

**Q 50-53**

A strong client and community led organisational culture allows those people working within it to take risks, be innovative, be reflective and both learn and teach. A statement attributed to John Gordon "Culture beats strategy every time" highlights the importance of organisational culture. This culture is further enhanced by open and transparent communication and reflected in parallel process- both throughout all layers of the organisation and when engaging with external services and government departments.

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