



1 December 2014

Inquiry into the Services Sector
New Zealand Productivity Commission
PO Box 8036
The Terrace
Wellington 6143

Email to: info@productivity.govt.nz

Re: NZPC - More Effective Social Services Enquiry

ComVoices is a collaborative network of national NGOs.

We are an independent coalition of national organisations in the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector and represent a wide range of 32 organisations (Appendix 1). We were established to ensure that within Aotearoa - New Zealand there is a strong collaborative voice reflecting and promoting the value and common concerns of our sector through information, advocacy and dialogue.

We recently convened a joint workshop with the Combined Trade Unions to discuss the *More Effective Social Services Enquiry*. It was attended by sixteen people representing 15 national organisations (Appendix 2).

We want to draw to your attention the high level of agreement on the issues that these groups thought were most important.

What follows is a brief summary of the messages we agreed are a priority.

THE COMMON MESSAGES

1. The commodification of social services

- A lot of work in aged residential care is run by for-profit providers and the same model is being extended in Early Childhood Education
- Commodification of social services costs us our community capacity. Skills are being lost.
- Many social services cannot be packaged and purchased because the outcomes are not always quantifiable nor measurable in the way market commodities are.

- The outcomes we want are strong capable communities, strong capable community organisations, good quality contracts and delivery of services through realistic contracts

2. Funding, contracting, procurement

- There are issues around capacity building and there is significant support for measuring outcomes and a need for support for the development of data bases and the infrastructure to enable that
- In a competitive environment we are no longer able to work together with other community players to develop a strategy for what collectively we can best do for the community
- The needs of the community have been overlooked in the drive to meet the measurements/outcomes set by separate government departments. It is all about meeting the numbers not delivering cohesive and joined-up services
- The sector contribution goes well beyond the delivery of contracted services, but this added value is not counted or valued

3. The importance of community development

- We regard Community Development as a process designed to create conditions of economic and social progress for the whole community with its active participation and fullest possible reliance upon the community's initiative
- Nowhere in the document are community development, or community development principles mentioned
- Strong community development – how does that fit with Government who are the largest single provider of social services? How does that fit with the principles of community development?

4. The role of the state and other actors

- Partnership with Government is critical. In some dealings with government officials there is an adversarial approach. ComVoices has repeatedly stressed that working together in the spirit of partnership as in Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the key issue we want to address with Government

5. Structural impacts

- The enquiry does not acknowledge that much of the need being addressed by social services is the result of “system failure”.

6. Special protection models

- The potential for the State’s statutory obligations to be transferred to the community e.g. the possibility of a large NGO taking over the responsibility to make children wards of the state, another to manage WINZ case work, using the model of privately run prisons and. What impact will this have?

7. Definitions

- There is a language gap. The definitions in the paper are unclear as provided. The submissions from a number of the organisations that attended the workshop will define what terms such as market, investment, contestability etc. actually mean to the sector.

In the last nine months ComVoices provided Government Ministers and members of all political parties with *Communities Count 2 – ComVoices 2014 Pre-Election Briefing (CC2)*. This spelt out the priority issues for the community sector in the lead up to the General Election and for the next three years.

The issues were detailed under three headings; *Leave No One Behind, Strong Communities need Strong Community Organisations*, and *A Capable and Sustainable Community Sector*. I have attached for your information both the CC2 full document (Appendix 3) and a summary (Appendix 4).

I understand that by March 2015 there will be a draft report. We would like to meet with you at that point to hear what the submissions are saying and to provide any further information that may be required.

I look forward to ongoing contact with the Commission.

Yours sincerely



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Appendix 1 – ComVoices Membership List

Appendix 2 – ComVoices/CTU Joint Workshop Participant List

Appendix 3 – Community Counts 2 – ComVoices Pre-Election Briefing

Appendix 4 – Community Counts 2 Summary