

2006/4

May 2006

We're Not There Yet

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) welcomes the initiatives announced in this year's Budget, but says we're not there yet.

NZCCSS represents the social services of the Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Presbyterian Churches as well as the Methodist Church and the Salvation Army.

Council welcomes the announcement of increased funding in aged care, but says there is still much to be done. The increases in residential care (\$68 million over four years), and \$58 million over four years for home support services are good but not enough. However, it is pleasing to see an ongoing commitment by the Government to invest in the aged care sector. The challenge will be for the Government to ensure the increase in aged care is passed on to providers, as the Minister for Health noted in Parliament in response to a question on May 17.

The increases are recognition by the Government that the aged care sector needs additional funding beyond inflation, but the reality is that the pay gap between District Health Board nursing staff and aged care providers nursing staff will make it very difficult to recruit and retain suitable staff. Government has to address this key resourcing issue more seriously.

Additional funding for home support services is good news. We believe a robust home support service is an important part of delivering on the Health of Older People strategy.

The announcement of 2000 additional state houses over three years is positive and it's pleasing to see continued investment in this key area. The funding includes \$10 million capital for this financial year for modernising properties. Council also notes the expansion of the Housing Innovation Fund demonstration project by another year.

In children's health, strengthened child and adolescent health service and the creation of a 'school ready' health check for four year-olds and expanding the number of Well Child checks for pre-school children, a initiative of some \$23.6 million over four years are of note.

Of interest was the Government's announcement of an obesity campaign, initiatives of which will focus on working with schools, primary health care, social agencies and food industry bodies through the Healthy Eating, Healthy Action plan.

Violence prevention programmes were also a focus, with \$11.5 million, for example, to be spent over four years on a community prevention campaign to reinforce the unacceptability of family violence. Despite strong economic times and low unemployment, there are many New Zealanders who find life a struggle, and Council would have liked to have seen funding for organisations which assist poor and vulnerable families locally. Most of these agencies have not had realistic funding increases and their capacity to respond to needs flexibly obviously can't continue without an increase in funding.

Much has been done – but much remains to be done in meeting the needs of poor and vulnerable people in New Zealand. Budget 2006 includes some positive announcements – but we're not there yet.

Jeremy Irvine
Executive Officer.
New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services

PARLIAMENT

Introduced

Human Tissue (Organ Donation) Amendment Bill

This private members' bill put forward by National MP Dr Jackie Blue seeks to establish a register on which people can register their legally binding wish or state their objection to be an organ donor. It also provides for public information campaigns encouraging registration as a donor. Submissions to the Health Select Committee close on 14 July.

Easter Sunday Shop Trading Amendment Bill

Put forward by National MP Jacqui Dean, this private members' bill grants a partial exemption from the Shop Trading Hours Repeal Act 1990 to allow shops in communities with significant visitor industries to open on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Submissions to the Commerce Committee close on 29 June.

Supplementary order papers (SOPs)

Coroners Bill

Amendments recommended by the Select Committee have been included in SOP 32. Key amongst these are the right of the coroner to decide directly on the timing of the inquest (instead of directing the police), and extending eligibility of appointment of relief coroners to make up for a potential shortfall.

NZ Superannuation & Veterans' Pensions Bill

SOPs 34 and 35 split the Bill in two, the first one covering the superannuation provisions and the second covering war pensions.

Reports

Social Workers Registration Board

The first full year's financial review of the Board by the Parliamentary Social Services Select Committee, reported:

- The Board received 1,803 applications for annual practising certificates.
- However, relatively few social workers go on to gain registration, for which they also require a valid competence assessment.
- Of the 2,152 valid applications received by 31 January 2006, only 579 gained registration.

The board's 2004/05 budget forecast \$0.7 million in fee revenue. The lack of registrations, however, meant that it received only \$0.406 million. The small number of applicants gaining registration has created financial difficulties for the board. The board understands there will be a grant to cover the shortfall.

The application fee for registration is \$450, an annual practising certificate costs \$360 per year, and the disciplinary levy is \$90 per year.

Child Support

The Inland Revenue Department's financial review reported a \$21 million net increase over last year in the amount of child support collected. This partly reflects higher incomes as well as better collection rates.

Reciprocal debt collection arrangements with Australia helped the department locate 6629 liable parents whose whereabouts were previously unknown.

The Commissioner of Inland Revenue advised that the department would 'take an interest' in any law change that saw DNA testing used more frequently, to establish the paternity of the many thousands of New Zealand children who have no father's name recorded.

Submissions called for

Inquiry into Victims' Rights

The Justice and Electoral Committee has called for submissions on this inquiry. The terms of reference are to examine the place of, and outcomes for, victims of crime and their families in the criminal justice system by:

- reviewing legislation affecting victims, including the Victims' Rights Act 2002
- considering the terminology used for victims
- identifying services available to victims
- examining the concept that criminals owe a debt to individuals as well as society, including issues of compensation and reimbursement of costs
- examining the effect of the current court system on victims, including the role and status of complainants during court proceedings and the adequacy of court room layout and facilities
- examining the place of restorative justice programmes in the criminal justice system and their impact on victims
- considering any other relevant matters.

Submissions close on 30 June.

Inquiry into care of disabled people

The Social Services Select Committee recently announced an inquiry into the quality and care of services provision for disabled people and how they might be improved. The terms of reference and closing date have yet to be announced.

Immigration Review

The submissions closing date has been extended to 30 June.

News

Family Court statistics

In 2004, 60,000 adults were parties to cases or used Family Court services. Trends in Court activity since 1998 show:

- The number of guardianship cases decreased between 2003 and 2004 (21,000 adults and 16,960 children involved).
- The number of domestic violence cases continues to decrease (10,000 applicants or respondents in 2004, with 6799 children involved).
- Care and protection cases continue to increase but more slowly than before. In 2004, 8165 children were involved.
 - Mental health (3500 applications) and relationship property cases are increasing. There were 1300 cases under Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act (46 percent involving people aged 60-plus), and 2400 were parties to a relationship property case, most of them over 40 years old.

LEGISLATION UPDATE

Legislation	Stage and Progress	Impact
Child Support Amendment Bill (No.4)	Before Social Services Select Committee; awaiting hearing of submissions.	Writes off late payment penalties for liable parents who resume child support contributions.
Children, Young Persons & Their Families Amendment (No. 4) Bill	Awaiting second reading. Amended by SOP 261.	Aims to improve youth justice processes, prevent persistent offending. CYFS may assign investigation and care to NGOs.
Coroners Bill	Reported from Select Committee. Amended by SOP 32. (see p.2)	Reforms coronial system for effectiveness and better response to bereaved families.
Crimes (Abolition of force as justification for child discipline) Amendment Bill (Sue Bradford)	Awaiting Select Committee hearing of submissions.	Removes the use of 'reasonable force' for correction as a defence against assault by a parent on their child.
Criminal Procedure Bill	Passed second reading; awaiting committee stages.	Omnibus bill to improve court efficiency, modify jury system, change double jeopardy rule.
Criminal Procedures & Instruments Bill	Introduced 22 June 2005. Awaiting first reading.	Introduces civil forfeiture regime for proceeds of crime.
Crimes of Torture Amendment Bill	Select Committee is hearing submissions.	Introduces regular visiting of prisons to prevent torture or other cruelty.
Disabled Persons Employment Promotion (Repeal & Related Matters) Bill	Awaiting second reading.	Ensures people with disabilities in sheltered workshops have the same wage and employment rights as other workers.
Easter Sunday Shop Trading Amendment Bill: Private Members' Bill, Jacqui Dean	Before Commerce Committee. Submissions close 29 June.	Grants partial exemption to shops in visitor districts from the requirement to be closed on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
Employment Relations Amendment Bill	Transport & Industrial Relations Select Committee is hearing submissions.	Protects employees in situations where contracts are sold/ transferred to new employer or contractor.
Employment Relations (Flexible Working Hours) Amendment Bill. Private Members' Bill, Sue Kedgley	Interim committee report considered by Parliament 3 May.	Enables employees with young and dependent children to request part-time, flexible & reduced working hours.
Employment Relations (probationary Employment) Amendment Bill. Private Members' Bill, Wayne Mapp.	Transport & Industrial Relations Committee; submissions closed. Report due 14 September.	Introduces 90-day probation period for new employees.
Evidence Bill	Before Justice & Electoral Select Committee. Report due 31 August.	Draws together common law and statutory provisions for evidence.
Human Rights (Gender Identity) Amendment Bill Private Members' Bill, Georgina Beyer	Awaiting first reading.	Includes 'gender identity' as a prohibited grounds for discrimination.
Human Tissue (Organ Donation) Amendment Bill: Private Members' Bill, Jackie Blue.	Before Health Select Committee; submissions close 14 July.	Sets up a register where people can place their legal binding wish (or objection) to be an organ donor; promotes donation.
Insolvency Law Reform Bill	Before Commerce Select Committee.	Modernises insolvency & personal bankruptcy law & liquidation options.
Kiwisaver Bill	Before Finance & Expenditure Committee; submissions closed.	Sets up scheme to increase level of savings through workplace arrangements.
Minimum Wages (Abolition of Age Discrimination) Amendment Bill. Private Members' Bill, Sue Bradford	Before Transport & Industrial Relations Select Committee; submissions closed.	Abolishes discrimination on grounds of age in setting minimum wage rates, but allows apprentice & other exceptions.
New Zealand Day Bill Private Members' Bill, Peter Dunne	Before Justice and Electoral Committee. Report due 31 August.	Replaces Waitangi Day with a New Zealand Day.
New Zealand Superannuation & Veterans' Pensions Amendment Bill	At committal stage. Now split into two bills by SOP no.35.	Extends the higher (single) rate of NZ Superannuation to those whose partner is in long-term residential care.
Oaths Modernisation Bill	Awaiting second reading.	Modernises the language used in oaths.
Residential Tenancies (Damage Insurance) Amendment Bill. Private Members' Bill: Maryann Street.	Before Social Services Select Committee; submissions close 14 July.	Extends landlord's insurance cover to include accidental damage by tenants.
Young Offenders (Serious Crimes) Bill – Private Members' Bill, Ron Mark	Before Law & Order Select Committee; no closing date.	Makes 10-14 year olds who commit 'serious offences' subject to Youth Court.

Snippets from the budget

Legal Services Agency

More than half of Vote Justice goes on administration, provision of, and access to legal services from the Legal Services Agency. \$18.6 million covers the Agency's administrative services, including managing legal aid, community legal services, management of pilot schemes, research and law-related education for the public. Three million more has been allocated for legal aid payments (now \$97 million). As well as this,

- \$5.118m (3% of Vote Justice) goes on purchasing support for victims.
- \$1.084m (less than 1%) on purchasing effective interventions for serious recidivist young offenders.
- \$5.9m (3%) on purchasing community crime prevention services and programmes delivered by community and local government agency providers.

Crime Prevention

The Ministry of Justice also contracts a variety of organisations (territorial authorities, iwi, Pacific groups and community providers) to carry out crime prevention projects in specific areas, such as:

- youth at risk
- community and sexual violence prevention
- theft of and from cars, and
- community managed restorative justice.

Allocations for the current year total, \$6.5m, for the 2006/7 year \$5.9m.

Human Rights Commission

This agency gets an extra \$300,000 in the coming year, increasing its income to \$7.6m. It is expected to deal with complaints and enquiries relating to Human Rights, undertake advocacy, promotion and education programmes, facilitate networks, produce submissions and reports and (a new item) to undertake research, education and discussion activities on human rights and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Child Youth & Family

The Agency received funding for a wide range of activities relating to:

- adoption services
- care and protection services
- development and funding community services
- policy advice and ministerial servicing
- prevention services – including \$420,000 for the Community-based Youth Development Fund aimed at youth suicide prevention.
- youth justice services.

Some funding is shifted around between CYF and the Ministry of Social Development which makes comparison with previous years difficult.

CYF has been allocated:

- \$11.435 million to purchase counselling and rehabilitation services, including family counselling and other post-crisis interventions that restore the wellbeing of children, young people and families who have suffered harm and abuse or other forms of family breakdown or youth justice issues.
- \$5.814 million to buy education and prevention programmes and initiatives that provide skills to children, young people and families who are at risk of harm or abuse, which will help them reduce the risk of that abuse or harm. Additional funding has been received for reducing violence in families.
- \$38.275 million for purchasing family wellbeing services to improve the life outcomes for children, young people and families through support and development programmes, and programmes that will prevent any future harm or abuse.
- \$4.76 million is allocated to services that contribute to strengthening the capacity and capability of providers to deliver strong and effective social services. This is expected to cover up to 200 groups which are part of national organisations, and fund up to 170 groups or organisations to receive training, business mentoring and other forms of organisational development.

Community & Voluntary Sector

In 2006/2007 the appropriation for the community and voluntary sector includes:

- \$11.905 million on servicing community-oriented grants schemes (including the Lottery Grants Board) and several Crown Trusts and Fellowships.
- \$5.526 million for a community-based advisory service to enable community groups to more effectively meet the needs of individuals, groups and agencies.
- \$1.685 million to provide policy advice with a community/whanau/hapu/iwi development perspective, and other support to the Minister, including matters relating to the performance of and appointments to the Charities Commission.

As well, the OCVS gets \$18.237 million for the coming year and \$17.403 million four-year period 2005/06 to 2008/09. This is intended to be spent as follows:

- \$3.081 million purchasing services for administration of charities from the Charities Commission, and services for community-based youth suicide prevention projects.
- \$15.156 million for grants to community and voluntary sector organisations, including Disarmament Education Grants and the Charities Commission Litigation Fund.
- \$17.403 million to be spent over a four-year period on the "Community Partnership Fund" for initiatives that will improve capability and skills to use information and communication technology.



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Law Scene is edited by Julia Stuart
ISSN - 1172-2584

Comments or contributions are welcome.
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10 issues per year
Subscriptions: \$30 per annum / \$27 for voluntary organisations