



Recommendations from the  
**Welfare Expert Advisory Group Report**  
and the review of New Zealand's welfare system

February 2019



## Before you start



This is written in Easy Read, but it can still be hard for some people to read something this long.

Some things that might help when you are reading it are:

- Read a few pages at a time
- Ask someone to help you to understand it.



# About the Welfare Expert Advisory Group

**MAY  
2018**

The Government set up the Welfare Expert Advisory Group in May 2018.

From now on we will call the Welfare Expert Advisory Group **the Group**.



The Group was set up to look at the welfare system.



The welfare system includes people who get payments from Work and Income.

The Group was not asked to look at:

- New Zealand Superannuation
- Veteran's Pension
- War Pensions
- Student Allowance.



The Group was made up of 11 people with different experience and backgrounds.

Many of the Group know a lot about working with people who are on benefits.



The Group want to make sure that everyone is getting what they need from the welfare system.

They also wanted to know what things needed to change to make it better.



The Group listened to 3,500 people from all over New Zealand who know about the welfare system



Including lots of people on benefits and people with disabilities.



The Group also looked at research and studies to learn more about the welfare system.



The Group has written a report for the Government. The report is about:

- what people told the Group
- how things are now
- what things the Group think
- should change.

**Recommendations**

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The report has a list of things that the Government will think about changing to make the welfare system better.



The Government may choose to do all, some or none of the things listed in the report.



The Government is looking at the report now.



We don't know yet when the Government will decide.

Nothing will change until this happens.

# About the welfare system

The welfare system is the help given by the government to people so they have enough money when they need it.

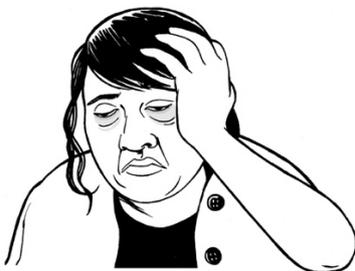
The welfare system also helps people to find jobs.



The welfare system provides help through Work and Income offices.

Some people need help because they:

- lost their job
- got sick
- have a disability
- can't work.





Some people need help because they do not have enough money for things like:

- food
- housing
- school.

People get help from the welfare system through:



- benefit payments
- other payments to help with housing, emergency payments
- tax credits
- help to find a job.



Benefit payments are things like:

- Jobseeker Support
- Supported Living Payment



- Sole Parent Support

- Youth Payment
- Young Parent Payment.

Other payments are things like:

- Disability Allowance
- Accommodation Supplement



- Childcare Assistance



- Temporary Additional Support
- Special Needs Grants.



Tax Credits are:

- Family Tax Credit
- Best Start Tax Credit
- In-Work Tax Credit.

# What people told us

**This part of the book will tell you what people told us.**

It was important for us to listen to people.



Lots of people wanted to talk to us.



Lots of people told us that they need to be understood better including:



- Māori
- Pacific People
- Young people
- People who are sick
- People who have a disability
- People coming out of prison.

**Māori** said it is important that people they deal with think about:

- Māori culture and values
- The Treaty of Waitangi
- Letting them make their own decisions.



People who work in the welfare system also talked to us.

They talked about:



- Not having enough time to talk to people
- Not being able to do more to help people



- Needing more training
- Needing more staff.

## People told us:



That people on benefits should be helped when things are hard.

That everyone needs:



- enough money



- good places to live.



People said they are not getting enough money to live on.



It is very important to be treated kindly by Work and Income staff when they ask for help.



They want Work and Income to listen to them.

They want to talk to the same person at Work and Income every time so they do not have to repeat their story to someone they don't know.



They want the right help for them, that fits their needs.



They do not want rules that make life harder.



It is very hard to understand the rules at the moment.



The rules should be simple and easy to understand.



They need to know they are getting all the help they should be getting.



At the moment they have to go to many different places to get help, they want to get help in one place.



They need more help to find the right kind of work for them.



The Government should think about children more and make sure children have good lives.



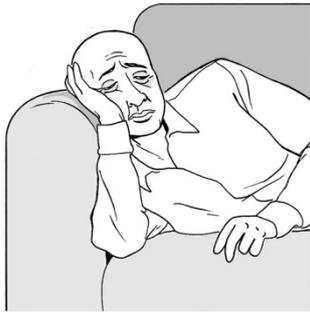
It is important to not just think about the person receiving a benefit but to think also about their:

- Whānau/family
- Hapū/wider family
- Iwi/tribe.



They want support in their community.

They want to be able to do things in their community.



They did not want to feel alone or ignored.

Help was sometimes:

- Hard to get
- Not very good.



Sometimes people could not get any help at all.

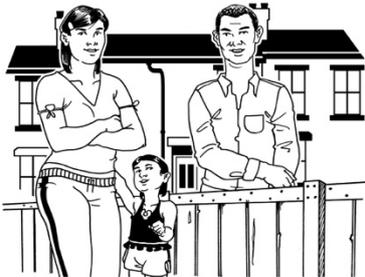
## Things the Group learned:



We listened to all the things people told us.



We also looked at research and studies to learn more.



This helped us to decide some things about:

- How things are now
- What needs to change to make it better.

## How things are now

**This part has the things we decided about:**

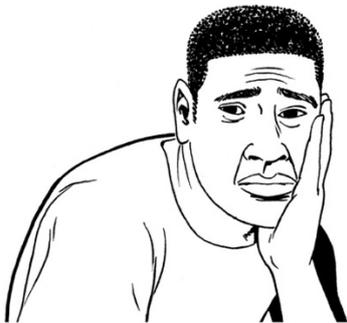
- **How things are now**
- **What needs to change.**

Things are not working well now.



People do not have enough:

- Money
- Help.



Lots of people on benefits are poor and living in poverty.





Poverty has big impacts on:

- People's mental health
- Children
- Families
- Whānau
- Society.



The welfare system is old fashioned and is based on how people lived over 50 years ago.

Lots of people need help for lots of different reasons.





The welfare system isn't good at looking after different people in different situations.



The welfare system is too complicated.



There are lots of problems to deal with.

People are not getting enough money to live a decent life.



Lots of people feel stressed about how the welfare system works now.

The welfare system does not work for people on benefits, especially:



- Māori
- Pacific People
- Youth
- People who are sick
- People who are disabled
- People coming out of prison.



People on benefits do not trust the welfare system.



Sometimes the welfare system makes life harder for people.



Some people have given up and do not even ask for help because they think no one will listen or they will not get help.

Too many people on benefits do not get the help they should.

Some good work has been started like:



- Changes to the way people are treated at Work and Income

- New designs for Work and Income offices.

This needs to keep going and more needs to start.



Some people are not treated well.



The types of jobs are changing.

Lots of jobs are short term.

New skills are needed.

People on benefits need more help to:

- find work
- stay in work
- be trained for work.



But the welfare system has to also change to the current job market.

# What needs to change

The welfare system is very big.

The welfare system has to work with lots of other parts of government like:



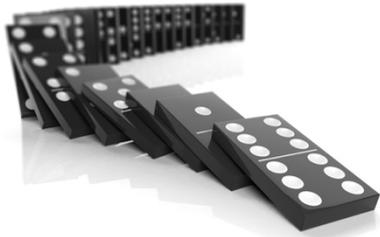
- Health
- Education
- Justice
- Inland Revenue (tax).



These systems all need to work together to make sure New Zealanders are getting the best help they can.

It will take a long time to make all the changes that are needed.

We have made a start.



Sometimes when we make a change it can cause other things to happen that we did not expect.

A lot more work needs to be done to make sure the right changes are made.



We need to be able to give good welfare support in a way that works for everyone.

We need to focus on long-term goals.



This will improve wellbeing.

Some people have different welfare support needs like:



- Māori
- Pacific People
- Youth
- People who are sick
- People who are disabled
- People coming out of prison.

We need to make changes to the welfare system so everyone gets the welfare help they need.



Everyone should be treated the same.



Recommendations
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The Group has 42 recommendations on changes that should be made to the welfare system by the Government.

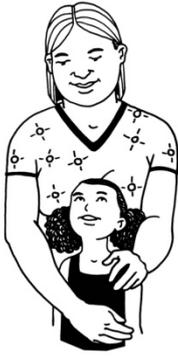


The Government will decide what happens next.

We talk about changes in the help people get like:



- The amount of money they need
- The services that should be in place
- The support people need.



People should feel safe and happy to ask for help from Work and Income.

People should always be treated as the most important part of the service.



Services should work well for all different kinds of people.



Services should look at what's best for the person.

Services should have:

- Staff with different and better skills
- Staff working in ways that meet the person's needs
- Enough staff so people have time to talk about their situation and what they need.



Any changes to the welfare system must be fair to everyone.



Support for people to find a job is not good.



The welfare system is unfair for people who are sick or disabled and for the people who care for them.



# What the Group wants the Government to do



Changes to the welfare system must be made.

Some of the changes are very urgent.

**URGENT**

**8**

The things that need to change fit into 8 groups.

The 8 groups have things that we think the Government should do to make things better.

In the next part we have some information about the 8 groups of things that need to change.

# Changes to the law



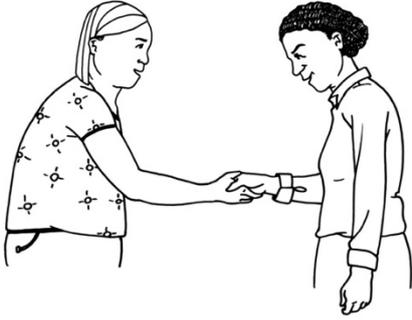
The law needs to be changed.

**If the law changes it will mean:**

- That the welfare system is about people and puts their wellbeing first.



- People will get enough money so they can live a good life.



- People will be treated with dignity.



- Dignity here means treating people with kindness and respect.



- People will be able to live in dignity.



- People can do things in their communities.

- Whānau, families, children and relationships are seen as important.



If these law changes happen, it will mean the law will not need to be changed for a long time.

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The government has to be able to afford these changes.

## The system needs to be better for Māori



We must honour people's dignity at all times.

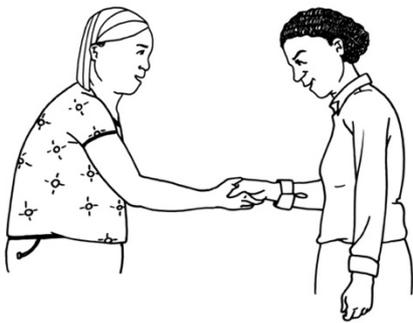
We must consider the Treaty of Waitangi.

We must work with Māori to make the right changes to the system.

The system needs to understand Māori culture.

We must make sure the system is delivering the right support for Māori.

# Restore trust



There needs to be trust between the people working in the welfare system and the people who need help.

We need to have guidelines (rules) that show:



- Expectations  
(what people should do)
- and
- Responsibilities  
(what Work and Income should do).

Expectations are what people should do.

Responsibilities are what Work and Income should do.



The system should not be based on punishment.



The guidelines are for people who work in the welfare system as well as people who need help.



There are lots of rules in the current welfare system.

These rules are called obligations and sanctions.

An obligation is what you have to do to get support from the welfare system.



A sanction is what is taken away if you do not do what you were supposed to do.



Some of these obligations and sanctions hurt people.

We would like some of these obligations and sanctions to be taken away.



We need to lower the amount of money people owe to Work and Income.

We need to give better support to people coming out of prison.

## People receiving benefits need more money



Payments need to be increased.

This means increasing lots of payments like main benefits and tax credits.



Work and Income need to make sure people are getting all the help they should be getting.



It needs to be easier for people to know all the payments they can get.



There shouldn't be waiting times for benefit payments to start.



It needs to be easier to use the welfare system.

The welfare system must be affordable for the government.



There needs to be a new payment for people living on their own.



The government needs to increase incomes for people getting payments.

# Improve housing support



More houses need to be available for people who receive a benefit.



Houses must be healthy, warm and safe.

People on low incomes need houses that are:

- affordable
- suitable.



Give people more help with housing costs.



End homelessness.

# Better support for work



We need a better employment service to help people find jobs.



A better employment service would help people retrain if they needed to.



This would help people find and keep good, long-term jobs.

Changes are needed in many parts of government.



We also need to help young people to be:

- learning
- earning (working)
- caring (if they are young parents).

## People with health conditions or disabilities must be treated better

People need enough money and support so they can live a life with dignity.



The support should be fair across the social sector.



If it is possible people should be helped to find and stay in work.



The New Zealand Health and Disability System Review should also look at:

- The accident compensation scheme
- Welfare system
- Health and disability system.

# Make communities stronger



Strong communities are good for all New Zealand.



We need more opportunities for people to help in the community.



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