



Submission on the Social Security Amendment Bill The Social Services and Community Committee

**Submitted by Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa (Te Pai Ora SSPA)
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Introduction & Background

1. Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa (Te Pai Ora SSPA) welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Social Security Amendment Bill.
2. Te Pai Ora SSPA has concerns with proposed amendments to the Social Security Act.

About Te Pai Ora SSPA

3. Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa (Te Pai Ora SSPA) is a membership-based national organisation, comprised of over 240 community-based social service organisations from around Aotearoa New Zealand, based in both rural and urban locations.¹ Our membership makes up a vast majority of the service delivery to children and rangatahi in community social services.
4. Among our members are local and national social service providers, large national care providers, kaupapa Māori and Iwi social service organisations and Pacific providers. Te Pai Ora SSPA members work across the full spectrum of community-based social services with a central focus on supporting the positive outcomes of children, rangatahi, families and whānau.
5. Te Pai Ora SSPA full members are funded by government to deliver social services in our communities every day, with a predominant focus on children, rangatahi, families and whānau (the majority of member organisations are s.396 and/or s.403 providers). Our affiliate members are organisations that deliver social services for these people, and organisations and individuals who work in areas aligned to the interests of children, rangatahi, whānau or communities.
6. Many community-based social service organisations we represent provide support to families and whānau who are impacted by unemployment, the effects of which can be significant, long-term and inter-generational. Some of our members also assist people who are looking for work or are strengthening their work-related skills. A number of our member organisations have made individual submissions to articulate the impacts of the proposals; we also support these submissions.
7. Te Pai Ora SSPA's vision is that Aotearoa's community-based social services are sustainable, able to make a positive impact every day in our communities, supporting children, rangatahi and whānau to thrive now and into the future. Te Pai Ora SSPA works to strengthen Aotearoa's social sector through advocacy and engagement, learning and development, relationships and sector leadership.

¹ Find out more about Te Pai Ora SSPA at www.sspa.org.nz. Our strategic plan 2023-2026 can be found [here](#)



Te Pai Ora SSPA's position on this Bill

8. Te Pai Ora SSPA has concerns with the proposed amendments to the Social Security Act. The Changes to welfare settings to support people into employment and off benefit regulatory impact statement (RIS) does a good job of outlining some of the limitations with the proposals.
9. We fully support effective, impactful action that keeps people off government benefits and enables them to take up meaningful employment. Our community-based providers supporting families and whānau throughout Aotearoa see firsthand the devastating impacts of unemployment every day. We very much have a shared concern with rising rates of unemployment.
10. We remain concerned however that the proposed changes will not create the shift we are all hoping to achieve.

Causes of rise in benefit seeking

11. Given the turbulence of the on-going effects of COVID on the labour market and economy, more analysis should be done on why there has been an increase of people seeking benefit support and macro-economic shifts to address the rise in unemployment. Without this wider perspective, the options presented all imply the increase is the result of individual choice, rather than taking into account any macro-economic shifts. This gap is particularly concerning.

Effectiveness of proposals

12. The RIS outlines that there is limited evidence about the effectiveness of the proposal to establish a Community Work Experience as a non-financial sanction. Added to this, it is not clear whether options for other non-financial sanctions or activities were explored, for example investing in education opportunities to lift skill levels or wrap-around supports were considered. It is also not clear how known skill gaps in Aotearoa's labour market are informing these policy developments.

Impacts on sector to support changes and sector consultation

13. The success of these proposals rely on organisations being able to support changes, however there has been a concerning lack of consultation to test readiness of the sector.
14. Furthermore, changes to the benefit regime could lead to beneficiaries needing increased support from already stretched community-based social service providers.
15. At the next stage of development, it is essential that thorough consultation is undertaken to strengthen any changes.

Likely disproportionate impact on Māori

16. Māori are over-represented in the benefit system. As such particular attention should be taken to understand the potential impacts on Māori of the proposals. Furthermore, as a matter of course, thought should be given to solutions that align with Te Tiriti and consider the role of iwi and hapu in providing any support.

Thank you for considering Te Pai Ora SSPA's submission.