

Media Statement

8 May 2020

Call for front line social services to be fairly funded through Budget 2020 intensifies

Community leaders are calling on the Government to recognise the critical role NGO and iwi/Māori social services are playing in Aotearoa New Zealand's recovery through adequately funding them and giving them a voice in decision making.

They say that next week's government Budget is the moment for the Government to commit to invest in more sustainable funding to ensure the NGO and iwi/Māori social services' ongoing effectiveness, so that Aotearoa's children, families and whānau can get help when they need it. They say that this is more important now as the country moves to recover from the COVID-19 crisis.

The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services, Social Service Providers Aotearoa and Philanthropy New Zealand last week wrote to the Prime Minister and senior Cabinet Ministers seeking action.

"Government-contracted community social services are critical at any time, and even more so in a crisis when the number of people needing support leaps. It was the community social services and iwi/Māori groups that provided emergency food packages for ten days until the Government's emergency management response got up and running," NZCCSS Executive Officer Trevor McGlinchey said.

SSPA National Manager Brenda Pilott said the [independent report](#) they had commissioned in 2019 from MartinJenkins found the Government was underfunding social service providers by an estimated \$630m a year.

"Many of our critical social services were already in tenuous financial positions prior to COVID-19 due to this underfunding. For many years we've seen staff burnout and organisations using scarce resources to fundraise for money to keep going, when they should be able to fully focus on helping people," Brenda said.

"We support the Government's focus on wellbeing – but they can't achieve that without a strong community sector. Children, families and whānau rely on community supports being there for them as we emerge from the pandemic," Brenda said.

While acknowledging the Government has responded to the immediate pressures caused by the lockdown with targeted funding, the groups emphasise that this funding package did not address the long-term underfunding of NGO and iwi/Māori social services. Front-line service providers are experiencing increased continued high demand for social services, and are asking Government to close the funding gap so these providers can meet that demand and sustain the workforce needed to do so.

The NGO social service sector also asked for a more formal role to work with Government to help formulate and deliver on a strategy for social recovery, and the building of a strong social infrastructure that delivers wellbeing outcomes for children, whānau and communities.

“Decision making will be more effective if they involve the groups they expect to deliver the services, and through that process, also prioritise the voices of those who use the services. Any other process will mean our recovery will not be as great,” Trevor said.

Brenda Pilott agrees: “Budget 2020 is the moment that the funding gap facing our NGO and iwi/Māori social services must be addressed, so that we can keep working together with government to ensure a positive, sustained and equitable social and economic recovery from COVID-19 in Aotearoa. The country’s children, families and whānau stand to benefit from investment in closing the funding gap, and for some, their wellbeing outcomes depend on these services being able to meet their needs.”

ENDS

For further information contact:

NZ Council of Christian Social Services Trevor McGlinchey 027 286 9393

Social Service Providers Aotearoa Brenda Pilott 027 430 6016

Philanthropy New Zealand Chief Executive Sue McCabe 021 263 9639