



Te Ope Whakaora

Public Sphere

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News & Updates from The Salvation Army Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit | April 2013

‘The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children.’ Dietrich Bonhoeffer

EDITORIAL

Breakfast: Toast with a smidgen of beloved marmite (post-nationwide drought), a hearty bowl of porridge or a quick gulp of cereal—even if we don’t always, we all know the old saying of breakfast being the most important meal of the day. The familiar mid-morning hunger pang at work or school is even more distracting if you have accidentally skipped your morning meal.

But for thousands of New Zealand children, this diverting hunger is a regular and significant reality—many around the country go to school without a proper breakfast or lunch. Research has shown that hungry children at school face major barriers to their learning and social progress and development.¹ This is another facet and perpetuation of the poverty many children in New Zealand face today: an estimated 25% of our children live in poverty, a comparison that ranks us dismally against other OECD and developed nations.

Such disadvantage was not the norm 20 or 30 years ago. When a few children go hungry, it may be down to individual circumstances of individual families. But when thousands of children are going to school each day without sufficient nutrition then the problem is structural and the response needs to reflect that.

Common responses in media and political discourse are often filled with disbelief and scepticism. New Zealand, after all, is a developed country where everyone supposedly has a ‘fair go’, and any children not fed ahead of the school day must be products of parents who are not budgeting properly or who are inadequate caregivers. Yet, the Child Poverty Action Group noted in 2009 that food bank use is rising, especially from working families.² Many parents on benefits or working still struggle to make ends meet. Rising costs of housing and utilities mean sometimes a choice is made between paying the rent and buying

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healthy food. Blame shifting and rhetoric does not address the immediate problem of thousands of children going to school hungry *now*—in 2013.

The Education (Breakfast and Lunch Programmes in Schools) Amendment Bill proposes to provide nutritious, fully State-funded breakfast and lunch programmes into all decile 1 and 2 schools in New Zealand. If passed, this would be a direct implementation of one of the recommendations from the Child Action Poverty Group and the recent report from the Children’s Commissioner’s Expert Advisory Group to eradicate child poverty in New Zealand.

It will be important that charities, businesses, parents and volunteers already running or supporting food in schools programmes be encouraged to continue this support and work in harmony with the strategy. The State-led policy will provide an essential consistency that sponsor-reliant community organisations are not always able to deliver, especially in times of economic downturn.

The cost of the Bill is estimated at \$100 million a year, and there are valid and important questions to be asked as to where the money to fund this strategy will come. However, investing in the health and wellbeing of our children does not just make economic sense, it is a moral imperative. Healthy children grow into healthy adults that can build and contribute to healthy communities, and there is a collective responsibility to ensure our children really do get a ‘fair go’.

Annaliese Johnston
Intern

References

1. Donna Wynd, ‘Hunger for Learning: nutritional barriers to children’s education’ (Child Poverty Action Group, July 2011)
2. *ibid*

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PUBLICATIONS

Upcoming Reports

Our policy analysts are currently working on reports the Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit plans to publish in the next three months. The first, written by Ronji Tanielu, will focus on the Pasifika peoples, providing a snapshot of the social progress of one of New Zealand's largest ethnic groups. This report will adopt a similar format used in our valued 'State of the Nation' reports. The second report, to be authored by Alan Johnson, will present a number of proposals around housing policy and the accommodation supplement.

Submissions

The Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit made a submission on behalf of The Salvation Army on the Fisheries (Foreign Charter Vessels and Other Matters) Amendment Bill. We were generally supportive of the Bill, particularly its intent and the re-flagging of all fishing vessels in New Zealand waters. However, we did raise concern that the number of observers assigned to vessels might be insufficient given the large amount of fishing vessels in New Zealand waters at any one time. Our submissions can be viewed [here](#).

The Social Policy and Parliamentary Unit has supported the Oasis centres as they gather submissions for the Auckland Gambling Venue Policy changes in 2013.

We will also be making a submission on the Education (Breakfast and Lunch Programmes in School) Amendment Bill (see Editorial) in the near future.

UNIT NEWS

Prevent People Trafficking Conference

PREVENT PEOPLE TRAFFICKING CONFERENCE 2013



The Salvation Army's Prevent People Trafficking Conference, run

in conjunction with the United States Embassy and ECPAT Child Alert was held 11-12 April in Auckland.

The conference featured international experts Anne T. Gallagher and Matt Friedman as keynote speakers. An action-focused two days concentrated on the next steps necessary to prevent labour trafficking and exploitation in New Zealand in a Pacific context. This conference, coordinated by our social justice advocate Chris Frazer, brought together practitioners working in immigration, law, social justice and community groups

Break-out groups developed recommendations for specific trafficking challenges relating to migrants, sexual exploitation, economics, legislation, law enforcement and investigation, and international cooperation.

You can read more about our speakers and view the conference programme [here](#).

Just Action 2013



Rebuilding Justice Together
Conference | 18-19 September
TELSTRA CLEAR PACIFIC EVENTS CENTRE, MANUKAU

With only six months left, preparations for our Just Action 2013 conference in September are in full swing. We are proud to be hosting internationally

renowned activists and speakers on social justice, community development and peace-making, Dr John M. Perkins and Shane Claiborne. The two-day conference will bring together people from all over New Zealand who are passionate about social change and will equip and inspire delegates to rebuild justice in different parts of society, including issues affecting children and youth, housing, human trafficking, welfare reform, and social hazards like problem gambling.

Just Action attendees will have the opportunity to *turn passion to action* by contributing to the building of a Habitat for Humanity house during the conference for a family in need.

If you are interested in advertising this event to your church, community group or youth group, email justin_latif@nzf.salvationarmy.org

Generous early-bird and student discounts are available. Register online now at www.salvationarmy.org.nz/justaction.

For more information on the conference and on our headline speakers visit our event [Facebook page](#).

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