



Te Ope Whakaora

Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit

Working for the eradication of poverty in New Zealand

Unit Brief August 2020

From the Director

This is an election year and the Unit's annual State of the Nation Report published in February 2020 contained a strong call to citizenship. This was captured in the theme of the report—Tangata Whenua, Tangata Tiriti, Huia Tangata Kotahi—people of the land, people of the treaty, bring everyone together.

As we made this call to citizenship, we had no way of knowing what was ahead for us as a nation and the wider world. Who could have foreseen the Covid-19 virus and its impact?

Fifth Covid-19 Social Impact Report

Last week our fifth Covid-19 Social Impact Report was published. These reports have helped inform politicians and community leaders as well as Salvation Army members, staff, volunteers and leaders about how the impacts of this virus are being experienced economically and socially. So many people have expressed gratitude that these reports have helped them understand and respond to the crisis. The reports are made so much richer because of the 'on the ground' accounts from Salvation Army personnel.

The latest report shows a levelling off of some of the worst early social indicators, such as food insecurity and financial hardship. Other indicators—such as the number of applicants on the housing register—continue to rise beyond the level of crisis already apparent pre-Covid-19. Unemployment continues to rise, albeit currently below earlier Treasury predictions. However, the true economic impact of Covid-19 may not be known for some time, when wage subsidies come off, and we will almost certainly see a greater level of hardship.

See the fifth Covid-19 report [at this link](#). Have a read of the one-page Dashboard or the full report to get a good feel about how things are evolving in this crisis period. Another report is due at the end of August.



2020 General Election Issues Booklet

In addition to the Covid-19 report, the Unit has produced a '2020 General Election Issues' booklet for corps and centres, to encourage active participation in the democratic process. Copies of these will be sent out very soon to all corps and centres and are now available [online](#). The issues covered in the booklet include incomes & employment, social hazards (alcohol, drugs, gambling & debt), crime & punishment, housing and Te Tiriti, as well as the two referendum issues—legalisation of cannabis and the End of Life Choice Bill.

We hope you will find the booklet helpful in enabling you to actively engage as a citizen of Aotearoa New Zealand and that you will—individually or collectively (within your centre or community)—utilise the booklet to understand and wrestle with the issues we face as a nation as we all consider how to vote.

The election resources that we will provide online include:

- General Election Issues paper (20-page PDF)
- General Election Issues PowerPoint slides
- Introductory video (approx. 4 minutes)
- [Enrolment information](#)
- Links to further information (such as *War Cry* articles, MASIC position papers).

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We invite you to sign up to our online introduction to these election resources that will take place via an online webinar at 1pm on Thursday 13 August. To register, please go to this [link](#). Once you are registered, we will send you the link to take part in the webinar.

Please also read (later in this Unit Brief) Ana Ika's reflection on young people's involvement in the

democratic process—a further call for them to participate for the good of their future, and that of future generations.

'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!'—Amos 5:25 (NIV)

Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Hutson

Director—Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit

Out & About

Speaking/Presentations

11/06 Presented Covid-19 Dashboards at Auckland Church Leaders Meeting in support of Major Liz Gainsford—Ronji.

18/06 Teaching Cadets from BCM on 'The Biblical, Theological and Missional Mandate and Actioning the Mandate'—Ian.

21/06 Preached at Mt Albert Corps morning service on the Holy Spirit—Ronji.

09/07 Preached and had an AWESOME time at the Pukekohe Corps Home League—Ronji.

21/07 Delivered presentation to the Police Gang Intel and Drug Harm Units at the Police National HQ—Ronji.

30/07 Speaker at Palmerston North Christian Leaders Association AGM—Paul.

Submissions

08/06 Filed submission on Draft Addendum to Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance (CCCFA) Draft Lending Code—Ronji.

16/06 Filed submission on Guidelines for Medically Dependent and Vulnerable Consumers to the Electricity Authority—Ronji.

02/07 Filed submission on Draft Regulations to CCCFA—Ronji.

Government

04/06 Meeting with MP Alfred Ngaro and staff (Zoom) on debt collection—Team.

09/06 Meeting with Minister Kris Faafoi and staff on consumer lending, public housing, debt collection and repossession (Zoom)—Team.

22/06 Met with Department of Internal Affairs staff with Lisa Campbell and Siobhan Kemp (Oasis) about a grants data Official Information Request—Ronji.

24/06 Met with then-leaders of the Opposition and then a National Party Caucus that focuses on social investment— Ian, Paul & Ana.

30/06 Safer access to credit meeting with Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) officials and Siobhan Deans (Community Finance)—Ronji.

Stakeholder Meetings

08/06 Attended a meeting of the Auckland Community Housing Trust board.

17/06 Attended the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services meeting (Ian is the NZCCSS President)—Ian.

Media

22/05 Interview with [NewsHub Online](#) on Covid-19 Dashboards—Ronji.

05/08 Interview with [Breakfast Show](#) on Covid-19 Dashboards—Ian.

Internal Salvation Army

22/05 Meeting with Oasis staff about pokie machine grants—Ronji.

26/05 SPPU Covid-19 Dashboard Reference Group meeting—Team.

27/05 FinCap Zoom meeting—Ronji.

28/05 SPPU team strategy and planning day—Team.

03/06 Zoom meeting between the national Department of Corrections leadership and Salvation

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Army leadership as part of the memorandum between the two organisations—Ian.

05/06 Justice filming for PR films—Ronji.

05/06 Visited Browns Road Transitional Housing with Ana—Ronji.

06/06 Meeting of The Salvation Army Moral & Social Issues Council—Ian.

09/06 Phone interview with Ingrid Barratt for Covid-19 report—Ronji.

11/06 Attended The Salvation Army Northern Divisional Māori Ministry training—*Tāngata Tiriti: Treaty People*—Ian.

13/06 Māori Ministry Council hui—Ian.

15/06 Meeting with Laurelle Smith from The Salvation Army International Social Justice Committee—Team.

19/06 Follow up meeting with Māori Ministry—Team.

19/06 Meeting with the Good Shop staff about online gambling with Ana—Ronji.

22/06 SPPU—Theological reflection and discussion with Coralie Bridle—Team.

25/06 SPPU—Work-plan discussion and planning with Communications team—Ronji.

02/07 Attended first meeting of the Good Shop Advisory Board—Ronji.

09/07 Justice filming for PR—Ronji.

External

21/05 Attended Ngā Tāngata Microfinance Ltd Board meeting—Ronji.

04/06 Meeting with Mandy Siitia about Pacific migrants and budgeting—Ronji.

15/06 Meeting with Tupe Solomon from the Borrin Foundation (funding legal research and innovation in NZ)—Ronji.

17/06 Attended FinCap Board meeting—Ronji.

18/06 Attended Ngā Tāngata Microfinance strategy and planning meeting—Ronji.

18/06 Joined Utilities Disputes Ltd Consumer Panel annual review meeting—Ronji.

24/06 Attended Medically Dependent and Vulnerable Consumer webinar on Zoom—Ronji.

25/06 Met with Aaron Ironside who is heading the Say Nope to Dope Campaign to vote NO on the cannabis referendum vote—Ronji.

22-23/07 FinCap two-day Board and strategy meeting—Ronji.

30/07 Interview with COMT Auckland—Paul.

Think Piece

Every four years the boards start going up, the signs appear on the fences, pamphlets arrive in mail boxes and people go door knocking to hand out more pamphlets. Sometimes—if you're in the right place at the right time—you might just catch a politician walking around with an entourage handing out even *more* pamphlets. It is election season, a time for you to exercise your democratic right to cast your vote on who you think would best run our country.

A decade ago, if you had asked me about elections, I would have shrugged my shoulders and moved on. Voting wasn't a priority for the under-30s; we represent the highest percentage of non-voters, which in the last election was almost 700,000 New Zealanders.

As I write this think piece on my Apple MacBook Pro, I think about how a company like Apple enticed myself (and many others in my age group) to purchase an overpriced laptop that we probably don't need. Why can't that same strategy be applied to elections to entice young people to vote? I didn't purchase my MacBook Pro because of its memory capacity, retina display or processor speed, because with every new upgrade there are more features, better designs and increased performance. The buy-in for me was not on the 'What?'—the specs of the product—but it was the 'How?' How would this product be beneficial for me? Increased performance, increased efficiency and increased effectiveness (or so the advertisements made me think) were promised.

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It also helps that Apple has a prominent reputation for its products. Apple marketing shows consumers how their products can make you better.

Similarly, the average New Zealander under the age of 30 who is not in tune with politics would barely know enough to scratch the surface. They may know the names of the leaders of major political parties and the local MPs, but to drill down deeper into what those parties and individuals bring to the table would be asking too much of them. If we don't know or understand what these politicians are offering, then we won't question how these policies are beneficial for us, our families or our communities. If we are not aware of the benefits of these policies, then where's the buy-in or the incentive to vote? *There is none*. But people still do vote—even without knowing what's on offer.

Elections turn into a popularity contest. Can you imagine what would happen to Apple if their marketing strategy depended on their popularity without innovation and upgrades? That popularity would slowly dissipate if their products were not keeping up with the changing market.

Covid-19 changed many facets in our society, but also exposed many issues. The gaps in our health system, causing inefficiency. The disparity in our education system between low and high decile schools (many modems were sent to students from high decile schools who didn't need them, whilst students from low decile schools received one).

The need to increase welfare payments to provide a reasonable standard of living, which is continuing to be shunned by the Government. Now we have a two-tier system with people losing their job due to Covid-19 receiving almost double the amount of the Jobseeker Allowance.

Covid-19 will continue to change up the market for our society, and we need innovative policies that will guide our nation through recovery. Now more than ever, we need people to vote, not based on popularity but based on what policies the politicians are bringing to the table—and how those policies will benefit you, your family and your community.

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We welcome your feedback

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