



Te Ope Whakaora

Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit

Working for the eradication of poverty in New Zealand

Unit Brief **March 2020**

From the Director

This year is an election year and the Unit's annual State of the Nation Report has within it a strong call to citizenship. This has been 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'.

The report highlights some very positive developments in our nation's social progress. However, we note that little progress has occurred in lifting the families and children living in deepest poverty out of their lamentable situation. The politicians, it seems, struggle to find the courage to make the more radical changes required to address this state of affairs. This level of poverty and homelessness seems almost normalised to the point of acceptance or at least resignation in some circles.

It has been said that 'a nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members'. In a democracy, how our poor are treated is heavily influenced by how we as citizens feel and act about the way things are. A society that clearly calls for change can provide politicians with the fortitude to make the more courageous decisions required. This is what is needed to deal with the levels of poverty we are experiencing daily at the front line. Staff in our Salvation Army Corps and Centres around the country see the struggle in the eyes of the many desperate and anxious people that come for help.

This year the SPPU will be looking to provide information that supports people to think through the many issues that are highlighted in the *State of the Nation*. We hope it will enable people to consider what might be done to address this level of entrenched poverty and how we might,



as Christians, engage in the democratic process to best affect the kind of change required.

Please watch this space for more information about our awareness-raising initiative for the election as you consider the following words of scripture:

'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.' Proverbs 31:8–9 (NIV)

Lieutenant-Colonel Ian Hutson
Director—Social Policy & Parliamentary Unit



Key SPPU News

This year's report 'Tangata Whenua, Tangata Tiriti, Huia Tangata Kotahi—People of the Land, People of the Treaty, Bring Everyone Together' promotes a unified approach to key social issues like adequate housing for all, the wellbeing and safety of our children, and reducing poverty levels.

[READ THE REPORT HERE](#)

The *State of the Nation Report* was launched on 12–14 February 2020 in 10 different centres around the nation to good attendance. Mayors, MPs, and other community leaders were present with salvationists. The centres where these events took place included Whangārei, Manukau, Hamilton, Tauranga, Whanganui, Wellington, Christchurch, Tīmaru, Queenstown and Dunedin.

In addition, the media interest this year was significant with most mainstream media reporting on aspects of the report—and good social media engagement as well. See below some of the links to media related to the report.



On 10 February, SPPU and Manukau Community Ministries said farewell to friend and work colleague Vincent Wijesingha. The Unit is in the process of interviewing for a new Social Policy Analyst.

Out & About

Speaking/Presentations

27/02 ZOOM online live webinar presentation for Christian Budgeting NZ on the key parts of the *State of the Nation Report 2020*—Ronji .

[CHRISTIAN BUDGETING NZ ON FACEBOOK](#)

Submissions

Despite the extreme busyness during the *State of the Nation* period, the Unit was able to write five submissions to key Government Bills or reviews in January and February. These submissions were:

- The Budget Policy Statement 2020—giving our input on the Budget priorities for 2020.
- Public Service Legislation Bill—called for greater pay equity between NGO workers and government workers, and also highlighted the severe funding gaps for NGOs in NZ.
- Credit Contracts Regulations—technical submission focussed on stronger affordability assessments for people taking out loans.
- Racing Industry Bill—we strongly opposed this Bill with our Oasis service, especially as TAB NZ will have the ability to develop new gambling products.
- Urban Development Bill—we called for stronger protections for local communities affected by these developments, and advocated for more social housing and more affordable housing options.
- We have made oral submissions to Government MPs and select committees on the Budget Policy Statement, Racing Bill and Public Service Bill.

All our submissions are available [HERE](#)

Government

19/02 FinCap Trust Board meeting that focussed on the BFC Commissioning process and the new Client Voices system—Ronji.

29/01 The team met with MP Carmel Sepuloni (MSD) to discuss welfare reform, problem debt and social housing—whole team.

25/01 Informal meeting with officials from the Child Poverty Unit to discuss child poverty statistics—Paul.

Continued ...



Stakeholder Meetings

26/02 Attended the Leaders' Breakfast for the Billy Graham Association—Ronji.

20/02 Joined the Nga Tangata Microfinance Board teleconference, focussed on increasing funding for safer and more ethical credit—Ronji.

04/02 Met with Dr Mike Kwok from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association—Ronji.

19/02 Church Leaders' Advisors group—video conference—Ian/Paul.

29 & 30/01 The team went through an excellent media training session with the Rhema Media Group. We highly recommend this training to others—whole team.

25/02 The New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services Council meeting in Wellington—Ian.

Annual Forum 202 National Dialogue for Christian Unity in Wellington—Ian.

Media

14/01 Advocating for greater investment in welfare reform ([READ HERE](#))—Ronji.

22/01 Radio interview on Tuvalu language programme (531AM) covering *State of the Nation*—Ronji.

26/02 How to lift children out of poverty: Media release in response to release of child poverty statistics for 2019 ([READ HERE](#))

26/02 Interview for NewsTalkZB on child poverty statistics—Paul.

State Of The Nation 2020 Media Links

- [Scoop Independent News 1](#)
- [Scoop Independent News 2](#)
- [Voxy.co.nz](#)
- [Newstalk ZB \(Mike Hosking\)](#)
- [Newstalk ZB \(Kerre McIvor\)](#)
- [MSN.com 1](#)
- [Scoop Independent News 3](#)
- [MSN.com 2](#)
- [Newshub](#)
- [Otago Daily Times](#)

Community Advocacy

26/02 Attended the Deportees/section 501 hui organised by Community Law Aotearoa—Ronji.

25/02 Attended the Wilberforce 21 Advocacy workshop on Waiheke Island. Rev. Tim Costello from Australia was the main speaker. Attendees included CEOs of Christian NGOs, theologians, business people—Ronji.

17/02 Attended the Cannabis Referendum briefing from Family First ([READ HERE](#))—Ronji.

03/02 The Mangere Housing Community Regeneration Group held their strategic planning session led by Major Campbell Roberts—Ronji.

16/02 Attended Inter Faith Communities Hui in Manukau—Ian.

31/01 Celebration of the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Courts being officially instituted on completion of pilot programmes, Auckland—Ian.

31/01 Meeting with Te Ohu Whakawhanuanga Trust—broad based community organising, South Auckland—Ian.

Internal Salvation Army

22/02 Salvation Army South Auckland strategic planning hui—Ian.

23/03 Northern Divisional Celebration Meeting: Welcome to new Territorial Leaders and new Divisional Officers—Ian.

28/02 The Salvation Army National Social Mission Directors meeting at THQ Wellington—Ian.

4 & 6/02 Attended Waitangi Celebrations, Salvation Army Māori Ministry-led workshop, official ceremonies—Ian.

Blog

In Psalm 133, the writer beautifully states that it is a beautiful thing when brethren or God's people dwell together in unity. The word used for unity is the Hebrew word *yachad* which translates as union, togetherness or likeness. Unity is notoriously difficult to achieve, particularly for a large group of people. Yet it is, as the Psalmist writes, a beautiful thing to behold when unity is both sought and achieved. In a society there are seemingly more



things that divide us than unite us; political and religious views, theology, ethnicity, language, income levels, location of where you live and numerous other labels or 'sides' that divide. While acknowledging that these things that divide are often critical to who many of us are, The Salvation Army's call with this *State of the Nation Report 2020* is a challenge for us as a nation to find the things we can agree on. These will unite us despite the things that separate us. This is enshrined in the theme we have chosen for this year's report: 'Tangata Whenua, Tangata Tiriti, Huia Tangata Kotahi—People of the Land, People of the Treaty, Bring Everyone Together'.

This theme is about unity. It is also about a challenge to both The Salvation Army, and to us as a nation, to try to achieve unity in some key areas of social policy and social wellbeing in Aotearoa. The reality is there will never be complete unity on all matters. But we strongly believe that on critical issues—child poverty, violence against children, educational achievement, fairer incomes for all workers, sufficient benefit payments for those doing it most tough, justice reform to benefit both the offender and victim, and affordable housing options for all Kiwis—unity in planning, action and change can indeed be achieved. In an election year (which includes two important referenda questions), where citizenship and nationhood are fundamental to our democratic system, this call to come together as a nation and society on key issues is even more important.

Like previous *State of the Nation* reports, the 2020 report looks at five main areas of social wellbeing across five areas of social policy and social progress: Our Children, Work and Incomes, Crime and Punishment, Social Hazards and Housing. In this report, we use 24 indicators tracked across these five main areas. This is the 13th edition of this report and many of the indicators we track have been monitored for more than a decade. The Salvation Army uses publicly available data as well as some of our own internally-gathered data to determine the major trends and changes across these five areas. There are also some important recent modifications

to the report, including a section that monitors and reports on specific measurements of social progress and wellbeing for Māori people and whānau.

Some of the most confronting findings from this year's report include:

- About 174,000 children (roughly similar to the population of Hamilton) live in the deepest poverty in our nation
- A sharp increase in youth suicides, particularly for young males, since 2017
- Hardship assistance from Government continues to grow rapidly since 2017. For example, in October–December 2019, \$48 million was given out in emergency housing grants
- 2 out of every 3 women in prison are Māori
- Prosecutions for methamphetamine offences continue to climb while prosecutions for cannabis keep falling
- The social housing register came to about 14,000 applicants by the end of 2019.

In the end, The Salvation Army hopes this *State of the Nation Report 2020* can inform people and whānau, stimulate informed discussion and debate, and also help shape and influence some of the areas where we can indeed come together and unite for action and change. Again, as a nation we will never fully agree on every single issue or matter. But considering the Hebrew word *yachad* used by the Psalmist, the importance of citizenship in this election year, and the core theme of 'Tangata Whenua, Tangata Tiriti, Huia Tangata Kotahi', we need unity now more than ever as a nation on critical social issues affecting us all; particularly for the most marginalised and disadvantaged children, people and whānau in our society.

Ronji Tanielu
Senior Analyst

We welcome your feedback

PO Box 76249, Manukau, Auckland 2241

Phone (09) 262 2332 • social.policy@salvationarmy.org.nz
twitter.com/SPPU • facebook.com/SPPUNZ

