



**COMMISSION FOR ECOLOGY, JUSTICE AND PEACE
POVERTY COMMITTEE**

28 January 2022

**SUBMISSION TO THE FINANCE AND EXPENDITURE SELECT COMMITTEE
ON THE BUDGET POLICY STATEMENT**

We need to understand that all things are connected: the people, the land, the atmosphere, the oceans.

He Pou a Rangi: Climate Change Commission

Everything is connected. Concern for the environment thus needs to be joined to a sincere love for our fellow human beings and an unwavering commitment to resolving the problems of society.

Pope Francis: *Laudato Si'* paragraph 91

Introduction

1. The Wellington Ecology, Justice and Peace Commission supports the approach of the Budget Policy Statement, especially in relation to the continued development of a Wellbeing approach, including both the Living Standards framework and extension of this to Te Ara Waiora. We support the key focus areas for Budget 2021 being on responses to the Covid-19 pandemic and addressing key issues including climate change, family poverty and housing.
2. The Covid-19 pandemic and climate emergency, together with the ongoing inequalities present in so many aspects of our community life, require us as a society change our priorities and practices in order to protect life in all its forms.

Support for Te Ara Waiora

3. We continue to support the approach of the Living Standards framework, taking into account human, environmental, social and financial capitals.
4. We are very pleased to see the further development of this in Te Ara Waiora, recognising even deeper aspects of wellbeing, including Wairua, Te Taiao and Te Ira Tangata, corresponding to Catholic spirituality which is built on the relationships of Atua, Whenua and Tangata, also expressed as the relationship between God, the earth and our neighbour.

5. We welcome this new recognition of the spiritual dimension of life in the development of a Wellbeing Budget. This goes some way to giving effect to the verbal promise made by Governor Hobson to Bishop Pompallier at Waitangi in 1840 to protect religious freedom, including *ritenga Māori*.

Support for Overarching goals of Budget 2022

6. We agree that New Zealand's continued protection from Covid-19 and recovery from the impacts of Covid-19 needs to continue to be a high priority for Budget 2022.
7. We note that since the publication of this Budget Policy Statement in December 2021, New Zealand is facing additional new changes as a result of the Omicron outbreak, and recognise these goals also now need to include greater attention to supporting the New Zealand population through Omicron, as well as further refinement of the Traffic light alert framework.
8. We also agree that addressing climate change, family poverty and housing continue to be top priorities.

Further comments:

9. **Inequality:** In our submission last year, we wrote and talked to the Finance and Expenditure Select Committee about our concerns that the Committee needed better analysis of the impact of Covid-19 on inequality. We are pleased to see that addressed in a number of places and ways in this year's Budget Policy Statement. However, we feel even greater attention needs to be given to this, as the gap grows steeply between New Zealand families who already had homes before the Covid-19 crisis and those who now face what seem insurmountable obstacles to home ownership.
10. **Health:** We would like to note a discrepancy between the statement at the top of page 4 that 88% of New Zealanders report they are in good health, and the information further down that page that the proportion of New Zealanders experiencing mood and/or anxiety disorders has risen to 21.5%.
11. **Welfare:** We strongly welcome the benefit increases announced in Budget 2021, as well as other changes outlined on page 8. However, we also have experienced, especially through our Archdiocesan Benefit Impacts, that there is a gap between policy and service delivery, with beneficiaries continuing to share with us that they often need advocacy to access entitlements. As well as increasing direct support to New Zealanders and employers through the welfare system, there continues to be a need to address very low market incomes. A living wage remains out of reach for many of the poorest working households.
12. **Environment:** We are concerned at the information on page 9 that 25% of native vegetation cover in New Zealand is on land used for sheep and beef farming, with only 3% of this land permanently protected. Facts such as this undermine our assumptions and perceptions of New Zealand as a green, conservation-minded nation.
13. **Climate change:** We acknowledge that the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions in the year ended March 2021 may be temporary, owing to short-term impacts of Covid-19 lockdowns and

restrictions. We would like to see that many of the changes we have learned to adapt to during the past two years could become part of our post-Covid life, such as use of communications technology to replace travel to meetings and an increased acceptance of working from home arrangements. We welcome the increase in international aid to the Pacific to respond to the impacts of climate change.

14. ***Trust in institutions:*** We acknowledge also the concern about the reduction of trust in institutions, especially for young people and for Māori. We note that social connections and social cohesion is impacted by the racism experienced, especially by Māori, Pasifika and Asian New Zealanders. We see this perhaps most visibly in the mistrust expressed in vaccinations, and in formal medical and scientific information. However, we also note that a vast majority of New Zealanders have taken the opportunity to get vaccinated.

The Poverty Committee of the Wellington Archdiocesan Commission for Ecology Justice and Peace would like to speak to the Select Committee in support of our written submission.