

Submission of The Ecology Justice and Peace Commission of the Catholic Archdiocese of Wellington on proposed changes to Government Procurement Rules with particular reference to the Living Wage

The Wellington Catholic Archdiocese Commission for Ecology, Justice and Peace is established to:

contribute to and participate in work for justice and peace inspired and informed by Catholic Social Teaching. The Commission's key responsibilities are:

Supporting the communities of the Archdiocese and wider community to hear and actively respond to the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor;

Scrutinising all issues and institutions in society and in the Archdiocese in the light of Catholic social teaching.

The Commission is a faith community member of the Living Wage Movement.

Recommendation: That the revised procurement rules reinstate the requirement that the Living Wage be paid to Government contracted workers in cleaning, catering, and security services for public service departments.

The Living Wage:

A living Wage is the income necessary to provide workers and their families with the basic necessities of life. A living wage will enable workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society. Payment of the living wage (presently \$27.80 per hr) is a necessary and important step in the reduction of poverty in New Zealand.

Current procurement rules require that contractors in cleaning, catering and security services pay the living wage. To remove this requirement would have serious consequences for the workers concerned. It would increase hardship and likely require those affected to work longer hours, to the consequent detriment of family life and their own well-being. The living wage is of wider benefit, too, for those workers who receive it are, in being able to live reasonably dignified lives, purchasing goods and services from local businesses and thereby contributing to the health of the economy as a whole. The whole point of a living wage is to enable those receiving it to live dignified lives and to be included in society.

Catholic Social Teaching:

The Living Wage aligns closely to the concept of a “**Just Wage**” which has been ingrained in Catholic social teaching for at least 100 years. Wages must be sufficiently high to adequately provide for families and children, enabling working people to live with dignity and actively participate in society.

As followers of Christ, we are challenged to make a fundamental “option for the poor” ... The primary purpose of this special commitment to the poor is to enable them to become active participants in the life of society. It is to enable all persons to share in and contribute to the common good. (Economic Justice for all, US Catholic Bishops (1986), paragraph 88).

Pope Francis, in his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)* emphasised in 2013:

We are not simply talking about ensuring nourishment or a “dignified sustenance” for all people, but also their “general temporal welfare and prosperity”. This means education, access to health care, and above all employment, for it is through free, creative, participatory and mutually supportive labour that human beings express and enhance the dignity of their lives. A just wage enables them to have adequate access to all the other goods which are destined for our common use (paragraph 192).

This was also emphasised in 2013 by the Catholic Archdiocese of Auckland Justice and Peace Commission, itself a Member of the Living Wage Movement, which stated:

“Working people need wages which allow them to live with dignity and participate in society. When used in a particular employee/employer context the Living Wage calculation makes a valuable contribution towards determining whether wages are just.”

The stated strategy set out in the NZ Government Procurement Site seeking comment states :

*“ We can use government procurement to drive change. These changes include supporting climate change goals, working with a more diverse range of businesses **and improving conditions and wages for workers.** Government procurement is responsible for over \$51.5 billion in spending annually. and this strategy can help deliver greater public value across the procurement system.” (emphasis added)*

A living wage recognises the dignity of work.

Improving conditions and wages for workers will only be secured by retaining the requirement to pay the Living Wage to cleaning, catering and security services. Social Justice informed by the concept of the Just Wage demands it.

Please act justly.



Jim McAloon
Chairperson