



## **Inquiry into the determinants of well-being for Māori children**

### **Māori Affairs Select Committee**

#### **The Salvation Army Submission**

##### **1. Background**

The Salvation Army is an international Christian and social service organisation that has worked in New Zealand since 1883. We provide a wide range of practical spiritual, social and community services, particularly for those who are suffering, facing injustice, or those who have been forgotten and marginalised by mainstream society. The mission of The Salvation Army in the New Zealand, Fiji and Tonga Territory is to care for people, transform lives and reform society through God in Christ by the Holy Spirit's power.

The Salvation Army in New Zealand has a rich history of working with and serving children and their families through our corps (churches) and Community Ministry centres around the country.

Additionally, The Salvation Army has an equally long and meaningful record of engaging with Māori individuals, families and communities since 1884. We are passionately committed to using the Treaty of Waitangi as the basis of the cultural partnership between Māori and Pakeha. This commitment is further illustrated by other initiatives that The Salvation Army has implemented. For instance, we have established a Māori Ministry Council that provides ongoing advice to our Māori Ministry leaders and gives direction to our work with Māori. We have also formed a Māori Ministry network whose aims include knowing Te Atua (God) better and worship of Te Atua through waiata (songs), karakia (prayer) and other forms of Māori cultural expression.

##### **2. Submission**

It is within this context of service to, and partnership with, Māori communities that The Salvation Army makes this submission regarding the inquiry into the determinants of well-being for Māori children.

The Salvation Army acknowledges and applauds the Government's recent focus on child welfare through this inquiry, the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children, and other recent or current investigations commissioned by the Government. We support the fact that issues around child welfare and relative child poverty are being openly discussed by our communities and politicians.



The Salvation Army humbly recommends in this submission that:

- Government acknowledge and recognise a more biblical and culturally appropriate view of well-being indicators for Māori children
- Government measure our performance to the child well-being standards set in our nation's recent past *before* new child welfare-focused plans and strategies are developed and implemented in New Zealand
- Government encourages broader definitions of what are the determinants of well-being for Māori children.

The Salvation Army wants to recognise the wealth of expertise and knowledge for these issues from other sectors from our community. The Army passionately believes in collaboration, coordination and cooperation with partners within our communities as well as the public and private sectors. We believe these partnerships should work to ensure that children, their families and communities are effectively supported, poverty is eradicated in our nation and that the most vulnerable in our society are empowered. The Salvation Army particularly endorses submissions to this inquiry from groups like Every Child Counts New Zealand, as well as recent valuable research such as the study on children of Māori prisoners published by Te Puni Kokiri<sup>1</sup>.

### **3. Other relevant views of our children: Lessons from Tikanga Māori and the Bible**

Our Government system, structures and policy processes are founded on the Westminster system and are therefore very Euro- and Western-centric. As such, worldviews and expressions that do not fit neatly within these systems can sometimes be derided and marginalised by those who hold decision and policy making power.

The Salvation Army asserts that any inquiry and policy setting agenda regarding Māori children must acknowledge Tikanga Māori (Māori traditions and customs) as defined by Māori leaders and experts themselves. For example, Professor Mason Durie's landmark Te Whare Tapa Wha model<sup>2</sup> developed in 1982 continues to influence developments in the health, youth and community development, social work and other sectors both in New Zealand and abroad. Te Whare Tapa Wha is a model for Māori health consisting of te taha hinengaro (psychological health); te taha wairua (spiritual health); te taha tinana (physical health); and te taha whānau (family health). We sincerely believe that this inquiry, which is set within a Euro and Western-centric submissions framework, must be fully informed by experts and practitioners in Tikanga Māori. We defer to these Māori cultural experts to more effectively define the crucial place of Tikanga Māori in

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.tpk.govt.nz/en/in-print/our-publications/publications/a-study-of-the-children-of-prisoners-findings-from-Māori-data/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www2.careers.govt.nz/educators-practitioners/career-practice/career-theory-models/te-whare-tapa-wha/>



shaping the determinants of well-being for Māori children for the Māori Affairs Select Committee.

The Salvation Army is extremely passionate about our Christian identity and beliefs. This heritage informs and catalyses The Salvation Army's work through its corps, Community Ministry centres and numerous other services (eg, Addiction Services, Employment Plus) around the globe. However, The Salvation Army is also acutely aware of the separation of the Church from the State, which has led to a consistent and growing secularisation of our societal and political systems. We implore the Government to consider that there are valid Christian views of determinant factors of well-being for all children, including Māori children. These views are based on a biblical understanding of the sanctity of human life (see Psalm 139:13-16) and the unique relationship between God and humankind, and between people themselves (Mark 12:29-31). Without wanting to digress in a long doctrinal or theological analysis, The Salvation Army strongly advocates a broadening when defining the determinants of well-being for *all* children—including Māori children. We sincerely believe that there is a place for faith and Christianity in the researching, policy-setting and implementation phases of any child welfare process in New Zealand.

#### 4. Our past

The Salvation Army recently made a submission to the Green Paper for Vulnerable Children<sup>3</sup>. In that submission, we argued that as a nation we need to measure our performance against milestones set in the Agenda for Children 2002<sup>4</sup>. This Agenda called for, among other things, the end to child poverty, promoting a whole child approach, addressing violence in children's lives, and improving central government processes and services. This Agenda also spoke at length about the welfare of Māori children, particularly in areas like early childhood education, Māori whanau and the health of Māori children and babies. These key action areas look remarkably similar to the child welfare rhetoric and debate taking place in 2012.

It has been over a decade since this Agenda and its lofty goals were released. Our nation is now seemingly on the cusp of launching another comprehensive strategy or plan around child welfare, with recent inquiries from the Māori Affairs and Health select committees, the Green Paper process, and reforms relating to children in the courts, Child Youth and Family and so on. Yet, we have not effectively or transparently held ourselves accountable as a nation to the goals set in the Agenda from Children 2002. For instance, The Salvation Army comments in our most

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<http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/uploads/file/SPPU%20Submission%20Green%20Paper%20for%20Vulnerable%20Children.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/planning-strategy/agenda-children/>



recent State of the Nation report, *The Growing Divide*<sup>5</sup>, that child poverty rates have remained fairly constant from 2006 to 2011. In the decade since the Agenda's launch, have we effectively measured our attainment of its goals? Have we truly tried to understand the significant changes regarding the issues children face and issues around child welfare from the past decade so that future policy development and implementation is shaped by this knowledge?

The Salvation Army humbly submits that we should not seek to constantly 're-invent' the wheel and launch into a new set of sweeping child welfare reforms without effectively understanding and learning from the child welfare experiences of our past. The goals established in the Agenda for Children in 2002 are just as relevant today as they were in 2002.

## 5. Key indicators of well-being

This section of our submission will briefly comment on the areas The Salvation Army believes are key determinants of well-being for Māori children. The determinants that we note below are indicators that The Salvation Army has consistently advocated for in our work with children, families and communities. They are indicators that we believe are crucial in this discussion about Māori children, and they are also important in the broadening of the debate around child welfare.

### 5.1 State of the Nation

In our fifth annual State of the Nation report, *The Growing Divide*, The Salvation Army again commented at length on the state of our children in New Zealand. Below are the key indicators we specifically noted:

#### 5.1.1 *Child poverty*

It is a well publicised estimation that around 200,000 New Zealand children live in relative poverty, according to commonly accepted measures. The Salvation Army does not dispute this. We do, however, note that these poverty rates have remained fairly constant over the past five years. We applaud the fact that there is more open debate and discussion in the public arena around child poverty and poverty in general. The Salvation Army continues to urge both the Government and all members of society to work collectively towards effective solutions to these issues.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/research-media/social-policy-and-parliamentary-unit/state-of-nation-reports/the-growing-divide/>



Te Ope Whakāora

#### 5.1.2 *Children at risk*

The Salvation Army notes that in 2010/11, the rates of child abuse or neglect rose for the third consecutive year. Furthermore, notifications of child abuse and neglect to CYF are 140% greater in 2010/11 (approx 151,000 notifications) than in 2006 (approx 60,000 notifications). We believe the Government should continue to monitor this indicator closely to truly determine whether community attitudes *and* behaviours around children at risk are indeed changing.

#### 5.1.3 *Children and violence*

There have been massive increases in reported violence against children in recent years. This would be another relevant determinant of well-being for Māori children. The Salvation Army specifically notes that we believe Māori youth continue to be excessively criminalised in our society. From 2006 to 2011, Māori males aged 14-16 are 30% more likely than non-Māori males to be prosecuted by Police for the same or similar crimes. Although these figures deal with young people and not children, we urge that this type of data is used to help define determinants to well-being for Māori children because they go to the core of the development, socialisation and future consequences of all Māori children and young people.

#### 5.1.4 *Early childhood education*

There are improving rates of enrolment for Māori pre-schoolers which is very positive. The Salvation Army encourages the continued monitoring of this area to ensure existing gaps between Māori and non-Māori are reduced through policy and practice.

#### 5.1.5 *Educational achievement*

This indicator is more around young people in secondary school education. The Salvation Army believes it is still important to monitor this area, particularly as Māori children transition into primary and secondary school education.

#### 5.1.6 *Infant mortality*

The Salvation Army advises the Māori Affairs committee that this determinant is vital when understanding the well-being of Māori children. We are encouraged that Māori infant mortality rate fell from 7.15 in 2009/10 to 6.65 Māori infant deaths for every 100,000 live births.

#### 5.1.7 *Teenage pregnancy*

Both live births and abortions by teenagers have decreased between 2009 and 2010. This recent shift is encouraging although our teenage pregnancy rate is almost twice that of Australia. The Salvation Army acknowledges the dedicated work of groups like Taonga Teenage Parent Unit in Manurewa in working in this area.



## 6. Conclusion

The Salvation Army is pleased at the opportunity to make this submission. We humbly submit that other worldviews, particularly around a biblical and Tikanga Māori view, should be considered in this discourse around Māori children—and for all children. We urge a review of our past to inform our future actions as a nation. Finally, The Army presents these indicators detailed in our recent State of the Nation as directly relevant and critical in this inquiry into the determinants of well-being for Māori children. These indicators are essentially determinants that we urge the Government to monitor and use when setting and implementing policy.

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For more information or for an appearance before the committee, please contact:

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