

The Mission *Message*

State of the (Youth) Nation

The Mission is increasingly concerned about Youth as the recession continues to unfold. Recent reports from MSD suggest that Youth Unemployment has increased by 200% in the last 12 months.

Looking at Statistics New Zealand's website, we see that in March 2009 there were 321,000 New Zealanders aged 15-21, of whom 152,800 were not in the labour force (we assume in School), 168,200 were employed and 32,200 were unemployed – a rate of 19.1%.

If we assume that Youth Unemployment tracks as it has, and reaches 25-30%, 42,000-50,500 young people will shortly be without work or training.

At the same time, government has largely frozen training places at Polytechnics and Universities, and the Tertiary Education Commission is *cutting* places at Private Training Establishments. Youth Guarantee offers 8,000 or so additional places, nearly all of which will be offered at Polytechnics in the 2010 calendar year.

It is worth noting that the places Youth Guarantee adds are all for able students, capable of moving from secondary school to NQF level 3 courses. The places that are being cut are almost all in foundation-level education – literacy, numeracy, and general learning skills.

The chances are, then, that we will see an increase in young people with no work, and no training, of roughly 20,000. Possibly for as long as 18-24 months. In the life of an unoccupied, bored, teenager 2 years is a lifetime. It is most certainly not the kind of "gap" year that young people or society benefit from.



Enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future

We know, from the experiences of the late 1980's, that it will take social services agencies 20 years or more to resolve the many, varied, and often catastrophic consequences of this gap.

We predict an increase in youth crime, an increase in teenage pregnancies, an increase in the size of the low-skilled workforce and the resultant drag on productivity; and of course the generational outcomes that follow a lost cohort of young people.

Frankly, the Mission does not need this (largely preventable) work. We call on Government to do better, and to do so now.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Laura Black'.

Laura Black
Chief Executive

Recent Mission News

DEMAND

A recent in-house survey of our front line staff as to current social issues shows demand for:

- Support and Advocacy for older people is up by 47% over June 2008
- Support and Advocacy for families is up by 35% over June 2008
- Wise Up Walk Tall is up by 100% over June 2008
- Youth Training is up by 55% over June 2008 and we are now carrying unfunded places

As places for Adult Training and our Early Learning Centre are capped and both services have been at or close to capacity for over a year now, we have not been able to measure any increase in demand.

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At the same time:

- TEC Funding has remained static (per dollar per trainee per week amount) for five years. The value of this has been eroded by a cumulative 19% inflation.
- Due to the credit crunch, income from our own investments has roughly halved (down by approximately \$375,000 p.a.).
- The “20 hours a week free” scheme for 3 and 4 year olds in our preschool is costing us roughly \$1.25 per hour per child in comparison to our previous (low) rate of charge. This equates to a cost to us of \$81,000 p.a.

Top issues of concern reported by those we work with include:

- Poverty / increased costs of living / housing / loss of “rainy day” savings to help tide through
- Health Issues (including cold weather issues)
- Social Isolation / well being / relationship issues due to increased stress
- Uncertainty
- Family violence
- Lack of coordinated services

Coordinating appropriate and flexible service response is not easy, even within a single organisation. During a time of political change, and increased stress on all social service organisations, it is an even more complex task.



We are starting to see demand outstripping operational capacity within the sector, outstripping funding resourcing, and bypassing contracted / required outcomes and funder expectations and restrictions.

The Mission is keen to collaborate on solutions and opportunities with other providers, funders, and stakeholders; and again calls on the Dunedin City Council to step forward as advocate for the City, to assist with responding to the emerging social crisis.

SOCIAL HOUSING

The DCC has released its Social Housing “Strategy” and like many other submitters, the Mission has argued that the DCC should:

1. Advocate for and lead closer collaboration between providers toward cost savings in bulk maintenance costs, coordination of property management (including better matching of the combined housing stock to the total group of tenants), and engagement with third party organisations to support full property use by tenants. This to include planning of a multi-year schedule of maintenance and upgrading work.
2. Advocate for and lead long-term stock planning by the combined providers. Once this is complete, a schedule of purchases, exchanges, and sales is to be identified over the initial periods, again covering where at all possible the combined providers. This may involve identifying that new provision is required (e.g. emergency accommodation for women, youth and mental health consumers), and will therefore require the cooption of specialist support agencies to further the delivery of this provision.
3. Advocate for and lead the development of a “single desk” point of contact for all referrals to social housing stock. This may be a virtual desk, rotating amongst providers, but with a single email and phone contact as a first point of call.
4. Take an advocacy role with Work and Income in regards the setting of Accommodation Supplement rates for the city area; to support their being increased in recognition of the higher and unmoving rental rates in Dunedin.

CARISBROOK

One of the unintended (we are sure) impacts of the construction of a new Stadium at the North end of town, and the (eventual) decommissioning of Carisbrook, will be a loss of episodic but considerable economic benefit to South Dunedin.

Pubs, dairies, taxis, motels, and other businesses will all lose the spending associated with significant matches.



Whatever happens to the Carisbrook site once it is decommissioned must include some recognition of this economic loss – and we call on Council to engage with South Dunedin businesses and agencies to work through the opportunities that will arise.

PRISONER SUPPORT

As the Otago Corrections Facility moves to double bunking and a major increase in the muster, the Mission is considering how best we can engage with both the men inside, and their families on the outside.

The Mission currently runs StoryBook Dads literacy and Next Steps re-integration programmes at the OCF, and we are acutely aware that without support for both the men and their families, the risk of recidivism will remain high.

One of the graduates of the Next Steps programme has written “we have nowhere to go to [get] help to resocialise in a structured way so that being released after being in prison for so long you can go somewhere where you have support and help to live in a normal society.”

With a public leaning toward greater incarceration rates this need will only increase.

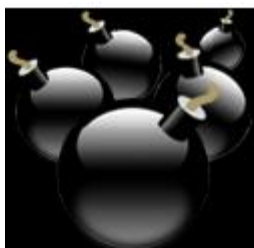
DCOSS FORUMS

The Mission has been involved in the recent DCOSS forums on closer collaboration between community and voluntary sector agencies, and we salute the work being done by DCOSS to bring a more strategic focus to social service delivery in Dunedin at this time.

Something to Think On

EXTREMISM

In the July edition of the Spectator (www.spectator.co.uk) Cass Sunstein (of “Nudge” fame) talks about the self-referential nature of extremism. His article canvasses Fascism, Islamic terrorism, Rwandan Genocide and other major



movements; but the argument is as applicable to western social movements (e.g. feminism, gangs) and even “group-think” – something most of us have struggled with from time to time.

Sunstein may even be pointing the way to one of the undying crises of consensus decision making – the lowest common denominator problem.

In essence, Sunstein says: to become an extremist, hang around with people you agree with.

“Much of the time groups of people end up thinking and doing things that group members would never think or do on their own. This is true for groups of teenagers ... those prone to violence ... investors and corporate executives ... government officials, neighbourhood groups, social reformers, political protestors, police officers, student organisations, labour unions and juries.”

He goes on to say that extremism is a function of group polarisation and social segregation is a major cause of group polarisation.

It is that social isolation, whether deliberate or accidental, from those who are different from us, produces an echo chamber of opinions and ideas. Core themes are magnified.

The question this raises for us all is: just how diverse are our decision-making, information-gathering, circles?

A Bit of the Mission

Storybook Dads delivers literacy education to a group of men at the Otago Correctional Facility, who would otherwise be resistant to skills-appropriate (i.e. children’s) reading material, by presenting it as a programme for *their* children.

These men read a favourite children’s book and this is recorded with pictures onto a DVD to go home to their kids. The process includes selection of an appropriate story, reading and articulation skills including character voices, phrasing, and the reading of punctuation, creating a mood – excitement/tension, pace and pausing and creating an atmosphere where the children will want to join in.

The process includes storyboarding skills where the way the story will be told is set out on paper to include any extras such as background music, sound effects, special messages they may wish to give. This includes the making of a card to go with the DVD.

Underpinning the literacy learning is the work that goes on around family relationships, bringing up children, being a role model and developing life changing habits.

StoryBook Dads is in effect a Trojan horse for delivering literacy education and parenting skills. We are particularly proud that the men in prison value the programme highly enough to try and trade access to places on it.



All adult learners need a context for their learning, and families and children are often the most powerful driving forces in people's lives. Using the context of reading a story and making a DVD is an opportunity for adults to develop their literacy skills and acquire extended parenting skills while participating in a fun activity that can be facilitated with individuals or with groups of adult learners.

Support & Learning - Right Now

APPROACH COMMUNITY LEARNING

Restart Your Learning!

Adult Learning • Youth Training • Family Learning • Prisoner Education

Contact us TODAY at 177 Mornington Road, Dunedin
Phone 487 7959 or email acl@dmm.org.nz

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICES

Support for Families & Children

Early Learning Centre • 20 Free hours for 3 & 4 year olds • Edible Gardens • Wise Up Walk Tall • Holiday Programme

Contact us TODAY at 11a Wesley Street, Dunedin
Phone 455 1445 or email cfs@dmm.org.nz

COMMUNITY & SOCIAL SERVICES

Advocacy & Support

Home Support • Support & Advocacy Service • Community Support • SPAN Caversham Social Group

Contact us TODAY on 466 4600 or email css@dmm.org.nz

HOW TO HELP

Donations

The Methodist Mission relies upon the generosity of donors to help us maintain and develop our services.

If you would like to know how a donation could make a difference please contact Laura Black, the General Manager, on 466 4600, write to her at P O Box 2391, South Dunedin 9044 or email laurab@dmm.org.nz.

Work for Us

We are an equal opportunity employer and welcome applications from suitably qualified people in all walks of life. The Methodist Mission has a number of job vacancies at most times, which are normally advertised in the ODT. To find out what vacancies we have, please call us on 466 4600 or email admin@dmm.org.nz.

Remember

The Methodist Mission has been serving the Dunedin community since 1890. We are a social service agency of Te Haahi Weteriana O Aotearoa, the Methodist Church of New Zealand. The vision of the Methodist Mission is of a fair, safe, caring and sustainable society where every citizen is valued and respected and enjoys equal opportunity to lead a fulfilled life. We promote social justice through partnerships that strengthen families and build fair and safe communities. In partnership with the network of Methodist social services agencies throughout Aotearoa, ours is a commitment to Creating Cycles of Hope®.

We use the airborne seed of the native New Zealand Clematis Paniculata, also called Puawhananga ("flower of the skies") as our emblem; the Maori harbinger of spring, a traveller to far-off places, a climber that grows in harmony with host trees of the forest: a gentle, free, adventurous plant that represents our commitment to enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future.

The Methodist Mission
Main Office Phone 03 466 4600
P O Box 2391
South Dunedin 9044
admin@dmm.org.nz

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