

The Mission *Message*

GOVERNMENT INTENT

Earlier this month Prime Minister John Key presented his Government's work programme for 2010; a series of initiatives that must now be taken as the "flavour" of this government.

It is clear that Mr Key and his top Ministers are searching for some "circuit-breakers", ideas that will substantially change the way "New Zealand Incorporated" functions, much like Tony Blair's vaunted third way of the late 1990s in Britain.

Unfortunately, this search is hobbled by both the need to keep a sufficient chunk of the voting public happy enough to keep National in Government (hence no capital gains tax, more of the punitive approach to law and order), and an ignorance of how life actually works for those worst off in our society.

Held under a social justice glass, the programme shows some serious flaws.

The proposed tax cuts and GST hike (even with amelioration through the benefit system and working for families) simply widen the gap between rich and poor; increasing the inequality in our society.

The various squeezes on those without work (work ready tests, shifting of eligibility for sickness benefit, lowering the threshold for work readiness for those on the DPB) will indeed "freshen" up the supply of labour; however, without jobs or training to go to, all that will happen is that the anxiety and stress of those with least resources will be amplified. And it is clear that most commentators, including the Governor of the Reserve Bank, are picking a long, slow, recovery.

There is a phrase starting to creep into the language of those who see these moves as desirable, and it is the demand for those at the bottom to have "some skin in the game". This is the assumption that we are doing everything for the poor, that in doing so we are incentivising

Enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future



dependency, and underlying this is the belief that somehow people enjoy being poor, enjoy struggling through life, enjoy prison, poor health, grotty jobs, poor housing, family violence and the rest: that these are active choices made by the poor.

It is a belief that all of us are rational, fully informed, consumers in the marketplace of life; and that if poor choices result in our lives then we should all blame only ourselves. This is the language and the orthodoxy of the insulated middle class, the disconnected rich and the resentful "kiwi battlers", and it ignores the "skin" already lost by the poor.

It is the Mission's experience no-one wants their children to grow up unemployed, unskilled, a teenage mother, working a collection of minimum-wage jobs, living in cramped and crowded conditions. The "skin" they have in the game that is frequently ignored is that of lost hopes, damaged identities, and stunted value. All of these things are the "choice" people make when other choices are inaccessible to them.

It is the work of the Mission to open those choices up so that people can have lives of meaning and responsibility.

It is work that may just have gotten a little harder.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Laura".

Laura Black
Chief Executive

Recent Mission News

120th BIRTHDAY

This year in late April, the Mission celebrates its 120th Birthday. It is a time of reflection on our history, and on what makes us different.

Before there was a welfare state, or free health care, Methodists experimented with cheap pharmacies, work cooperatives and credit unions. Methodists were many of the early campaigners against slavery, and often in the face of great opposition.

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Methodists advocated for prison reform when jails were violent degrading holes into which the desperate poor were thrown for little more than stealing bread. Methodists worked to improve literacy and health in early New Zealand.

Methodists joined the campaign against sweated labour before there were unions, before health and safety legislation, and before workers had a “right” to a weekend. Methodists provided orphanages and aged care homes when few others would. When others stepped in to provide those services, we moved on to new forms of social and community services.

Methodists have long opposed racism, sexism, human rights abuses, unfair trading practices, Third World debt, and environmental pollution for generations.

110 years ago, the Mission in Dunedin provided relief to needy women and children, in their homes as often as not. During the Great Depression we provided relief work and charitable aid. In 1930 our Early Learning Centre was established as the Citizen’s Childcare Centre. In the 1960’s our Kawerau Falls Holiday camp enabled struggling families to enjoy low-cost holidays.

In the 1980s Approach Community Learning came into our family of services, to provide a second chance at learning for those adults and teenagers who had missed out. Approach is now one of the oldest Private Training Establishments in the South Island, and receives “gold standard” audits from NZQA.

Today the Mission works in a client directed, outcome informed way. This mean we start with where you are, we look at where you want to get to, and we measure how well we are doing by how we you are achieving your goals. We are constantly adapting our work to fit changes in society; and we work collaboratively with a lot of other agencies facing the same challenges.

But always we have that special Methodist emphasis and commitment in our work to bring about personal and social change, by working with the strengths and opportunities facing people; in doing what is right not what is easy; and focussing on practical change for those we work with.

WORKING WITH POLYTECHNIC

The Mission is pleased to be working with Otago Polytechnic, teaching a class of 15 of the Polytechnic’s Youth Guarantee students.



Youth Guarantee is aimed at students who would otherwise struggle in high school or at polytechnic unaided, and is structured to deliver a qualification to each student by the end of a year’s study.

This is the first time that Polytechnic and the Mission have worked so closely together, and we are excited about the possibilities of bringing our specialist foundation education skills and their further education pathways together.

MEASURING SUCCESS

It is well known that organisations are what they value: measure outputs – clients seen, time spent - and you are a factory. Measure outcomes – the change in people’s lives – and you become a change agent.

For some time the Mission, like many other community organisations, has measured what we have been contracted to count: credits per trainee per week, 2 month labour market outcomes, and more.



And like many other community organisations, we have become frustrated at how little these measures tell us; and concerned that in not properly seeing the impact of what we do, we have not fully realised the potential of our work.

The Mission has recently started two new ways of measuring our work: a specialist assessment tool for use by our Support and Advocacy workers, and a new monitoring and evaluation process based around the Client Directed Outcome Informed model.

The great benefit of both of these initiatives is that they are formalised strengths-based tools, something dear to the Mission’s heart, evidence-based, and can have a radical impact on the effectiveness of delivery.

We expect to learn a great deal about what we do, what we should be doing, and how to do it better from these measures; a welcome challenge to us all.

WESLEYVILLE

WesleyVillage fundraising is at \$1,685,243 with the major fundraising yet to start. We have also reached agreement with the Historic Places Trust and been awarded an Archaeological Authority to undertake the necessary excavations, when construction starts.

DCC & SOCIAL JUSTICE

The Mission congratulates the Dunedin City Council on its new Social Housing policy. There is much in the policy that is innovative and likely to benefit Dunedin citizens in the long-term, and the Mission looks forward to the advantages of a more coordinated approach unfolding.



At the same time, like many others, we are lobbying Council in regards their draft Gambling policy. Some say that it is up to individuals to choose for themselves whether or not to gamble, and to bear the losses themselves.

Yet in the same way that our society does not accept this argument when it comes to smoking, wearing seatbelts, or taking drugs; we do not accept this argument about gambling either. The losses made by gamblers are borne by us all – on families already living in poverty, in workplaces suffering from fraud, and in the increase in family violence that attends problem gambling.

Some say that there is benefit from the pokies in the form of grants made by the Pokie trusts. And it is true, that if asked, most of us would say that the surplus from pokies goes to community groups doing good work and that this is a good thing.

Well, half of the surplus goes to the publicans, and whilst the Mission has no complaint about that, we don't believe that pubs can be described as a community group. The remainder go to a mix of sports clubs, racing organisations, and community groups.

The Mission does not believe that the racing industry, albeit an important economic activity and source of recreation for some, is a community group either.

There is some evidence that gaming funding has replaced grassroots fundraising for sports organisation, and increasingly on wages as organisations move more to paid rather than voluntary help - a considerable shift in the nature of how sports groups run themselves that has unfolded at more or less the same time as gaming funds became available to them. Nevertheless, we accept some community good is supported by gaming funds.

However, it is incorrect to say that the grants made are gaming trust funds. The grants actually come from the pockets of gamblers. 70% of pokies in Dunedin are in poor decile areas - this means that community groups are benefitting from both the problems and the poverty of our poorest citizens.

This is not morally acceptable to the Mission, and we suggest it should not be acceptable to Council.

The Mission does recognise that the profit stream from pokies is an essential part of some pub's ability to stay viable, and we recognise that not all gamblers are problem gamblers. For some, playing the pokies is a genuine pleasure.

The sinking lid policy option allows for recognition of these issues whilst also acknowledging the long-term damage that Pokie machines do in our city.

CUTS TO YOUTH TRAINING

As reported in our August '09 newsletter, the Government cut Youth Training places for the start of this calendar year. Approach Community Learning, a division of the Methodist Mission, lost HALF its places.

We were forced to undertake a review, as were many training providers, resulting in loss of tutor hours and two redundancies. These are always bruising times to go through and we are fortunate at how much support we received from staff during the process.



However, as also predicted in our August newsletter, youth unemployment has exploded. There are now well over 30,000 unemployed young people, and the numbers are increasing. Government programmes such as Job Ops and Community Max have done well, but their places are almost all used up, many months before expected.

And at Approach? Our occupancy is now running at 110% and we have waiting lists.

HIGH TRUST CONTRACTING

The Mission has been selected as one of 20 NGOs to pilot the High Trust Contract model being explored by the Ministry of Social Development. The process to date has been interesting and far more open than previous contracting experiences.

Our early achievements have been to create risk and opportunity registers. For the Mission the opportunities include:

- More flexibility in tailoring services to specific client wants and needs
- Leading to greater ease in collaborating with other agencies toward clusters of outcomes
- Reporting on outcomes the clients' actually experience – rather than the narrow band of target outcomes that so often hobble delivery

The risks are there too:

- Changes in key staff disturbing the relationship
- Re-emergence of the risk-averse Treasury model of contracting leaving us high and dry in the wrong river

I know that Mission staff involved have learnt a lot so far, and it's our sense that MSD staff are learning too – hopefully a winning combination.

TSUNAMI PREP

Imagine a Tsunami powering down the harbour or up from St Clair beach.

Well, the staff at the Early Learning Centre had to twice at the end of last year and both times had to think very carefully



about how to move 50 children and over a dozen adults at short notice.

One of the fortunate things about having multiple sites as an agency is having additional staff and vehicles to bring to bear at short notice (not including our IT guy's kayak, generously offered).

Whilst it is easy to see Health and Safety as a routine set of procedures, the Mission was grateful for the H&S Committee's rapid response to this issue.

A Bit of the Mission

Our licensed Early Childhood Preschool & Nursery provide a home-away-from-home environment for children, supportive curriculum, qualified staff and additional support and advocacy assistance for families.

Open between 7.30am – 5.30pm, at the corner of Hillside Road and Wesley Street in South Dunedin, only 5 kilometres from the Central Business District, our preschool is licensed for 36 children between the age of 2 and 5 years.

Our nursery licensed for 15 under two year olds. Families at our centre have the assistance of a Support and Advocacy Worker whenever needed. The preschool is a contracted provider of the 20 hours free ECE scheme.



Established over 80 years ago, our Early Learning Centre has a track record of great preschool and nursery services, and is involved in the leading edge of ELC development, completing a Ministry of Education Centre of Innovation research project as recently as 2007.

We provide a safe, caring and stimulating environment for each child to learn and develop. Throughout the day the children are provided with opportunities to participate in both individual and group experiences that promote physical, emotional and social skills, including painting, music, dance and messy exploration.

In our centre, children continually develop and maintain friendships and relationships with their teachers and their peers. A wide range of learning experiences and interests are encouraged and parents are encouraged to participate.

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 Chief Executive, 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.

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