

The Mission Message

Working Smarter

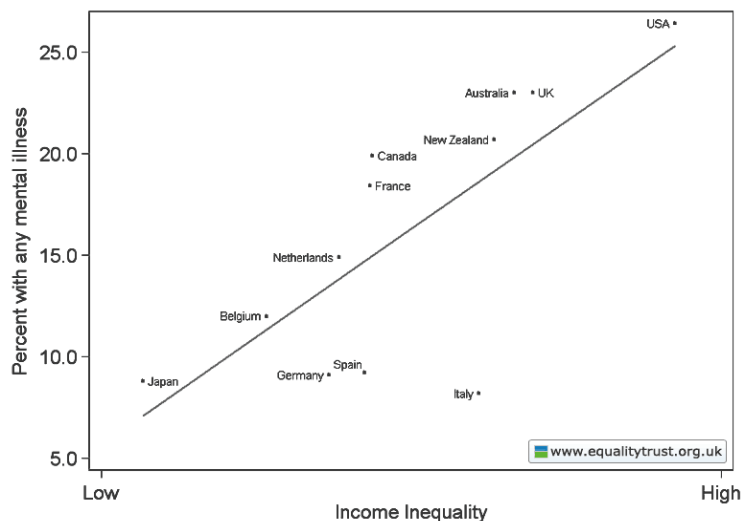
As these difficult economic times bring increasing complexity to the issue of how best to provide for the public good; with a lowered tax take leading to government looking for expenditure cuts, yet pundit after pundit calling for us all to spend our way out of recession; the funding rumour mill has hit high speed.

Like most community organisations we are hearing that government is asking departments for 10% cuts across the board, that Treasury is conducting a line-by-line review of all government expenditure; we see departments cutting staff with no real knowledge of how that will change services, or relationships with service providers; and of course there is the Prime Minister's call for New Zealanders to spend their tax cuts on debt first, and necessities of course, and then charitable giving.

In amongst this the government, like any new government wanting to put its stamp on things, is looking to fund new programmes, sometimes quite extraordinary ones (\$900,000 per annum per child for a Boot Camp for 35 young people, expensive enough but particularly when all the research shows that Boot Camps simply don't work).

At this time, more than anything, what New Zealand needs is not political ideology masquerading as "common sense", but strategy based on research into what actually works, and what doesn't.

The Spirit Level (see next column) shows that New Zealand when compared to other rich countries and across more than 18 different indicators (life expectancy, happiness, infant mortality, obesity, literacy, teenage pregnancy, homicides, imprisonment rates, ecological footprint, mental illness, drug use, amongst others) is in the worst third. As we are for the inequality of incomes across our society.



At some point, without many of us noticing, New Zealand has stopped being the egalitarian society we grew up with and still expect; and has become something quite different: a place where buying things has replaced being part of things.

It is time to recognise that the deficits above are all connected, that they relate in some part to the growing economic inequality in our society and to the growing disconnection between us as neighbours; and which can only be addressed by strategies that acknowledge this.

Laura

Laura Black
Chief Executive

WesleyVillage Progress

As you may have read, the Mission was successful in its consent application to the DCC for our WesleyVillage project. This was due in part to the overwhelming support we received via submissions to Council on the subject, and we thank all those that helped.

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Enough support and challenge for you to risk a better future

You would be forgiven if at times you had thought that all the Mission wanted to do was knock down an old church given the media exposure!

However, it is worth remembering that the corner of Wesley Street and Hillside Road is the least of the project. The total site covers 6 existing buildings and a number of sheds and garages – more than 2225 square metres.



The new complex will provide for a whole range of initiatives, some new, some new to South Dunedin, all to be far more accessible because they will be available on the doorstep of those using the services.

And it will provide for opportunity-based delivery, the development of community building programmes, and client-oriented support and advocacy services.

The vision of the Mission is for a fair, safe, caring and sustainable society where every citizen is valued and respected and enjoys equal opportunity to lead a fulfilled life. The methods we use, including the development of WesleyVillage are backed by international research, particularly in the evolving field of strengths-based practice.

Having said that, the work has only just begun! Consent is but one step on the way to getting the Village realised.

While we are on track with our fundraising, much of the cost of the project is yet to be raised. Your support will be invaluable.

If you would like to find out more, please contact Laura Black at laurab@dmm.org.nz or on 466 3026.

Recent Mission News

LTCCP SPECIAL PRIORITY AREAS

In conjunction with Otago Youth Wellness Trust, Age Concern, and with the support of DCOSS and Malcam, the Mission has asked the DCC to consider the creation of three special priority areas (South Dunedin, Brockville, North East Valley) for tailored community development strategies, through the Long Term Community Council Planning process for this year.

We have suggested that the DCC:

1. identify the specific parts of the city most in need of coordinated interventions by existing agencies as “Special Priority Areas”
2. develop a “Turnaround Strategy” for each, or each in combination, that:
 - a. combines the best of existing research into the opportunities and deficits facing each of these areas
 - b. combines the best of existing research into evidence-based interventions, providing a “shopping list” of Council-endorsed new programmes
 - c. provides for fast tracking of council initiatives in these areas, e.g. infrastructure repairs, retrofitting of insulation, piloting of new transport options etc
 - d. allowing for the prioritisation of new programmes that fit within the Turnaround Strategy in any appropriate Council processes
3. establishes a working party or standing committee of Council or other body that monitors and evaluates the implementation and impact of the strategy, and which promotes Council leadership of the strategy with funders and providers

Effectively, we have proposed that the Council consider the establishment of “community incubators”.

LTCCP SOCIAL HOUSING

The Mission has also, along with many others, protested the proposal to change the city’s social housing from a breakeven operation to one that returns \$1m to the city’s coffers. Particularly distressing is the change in the nature of the city’s commitment, relationship with, and expectations of its community housing in a way that will detrimentally impact on the least able, less financially secure, least resilient members of our community.

Current practice has been for the rental income received from the Council's community housing to go toward the capital expenditure required for the building of additional units.

The proposal changes the nature of this operation from a social good activity to a profit making activity.



This turns the residents from being citizens who need and who are due the city's assistance, into sources of revenue, and the Mission is extremely concerned at the proposed realignment of this relationship. We believe that recent New Zealand history has

clearly demonstrated the short-sighted nature of this kind of shift in relationship – from citizen to consumer – particularly when it is applied to our most needful citizens.

PASIFIKA LITERACY

We are pleased to announce that the Mission, in conjunction with Pacific Island community members has won a tender to provide literacy support to Pacific Island people in Dunedin. Watch this space for more information!

NURSERY EQUITY FUNDING

The Ministry of Education has agreed to pay additional "equity" funding to our Early Learning Centre Nursery because so many of our Nursery families come from the poor parts of town. This funding will be used to help fund the Support and Advocacy Worker attached to the Nursery, who works with families on self-identified issues.

BARRY DUNCAN SEPT/OCT

In conjunction with Wesley Community Action in Wellington, the Mission is bringing Barry Duncan of www.talkingcure.com to New Zealand in late September for a series of workshops on Client-Directed, Outcome-Informed engagement.



This is an exciting opportunity for the professional development of Mission staff, and some places may be offered to other community groups once planning is finalised. Please contact laurab@dmm.org.nz if you might be interested.

Something to Think On

THE SPIRIT LEVEL

Recently a friend travelled with his wife to Nepal for a trekking adventure. Despite the relative levels of poverty compared to New Zealand, he couldn't get over the relative level of contentment in Nepali society compared to New Zealand. The Nepali's that Lindsay met were both financially worse off than almost all Kiwis, and amazingly generally far happier in their lives.

Now, this could be down to limited exposure to Nepali society; it could even be a case of great white explorer misunderstands the locals, as was the case with Margaret Mead.

However, in their recent book, *The Spirit Level*, Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett argue convincingly that levels of income inequality within a society explain that society's life expectancy, child wellbeing, trust, levels of mental illness, drug use and infant mortality, obesity, literacy, teenage pregnancy, violence, and imprisonment.

According to their review of over 200 peer-reviewed research reports; more equal societies have fewer overall health and social problems than less equal societies. **Even the rich in a less equal society are worse off than the modestly well-off in a more equal society.**

When Wilkinson and Pickett analysed the data, they reached an astonishing conclusion: **that it is the experience of being unequal itself** that causes "poor life outcomes" as an expression of the stress of either being at the bottom of the totem pole, or having to maintain one's position at the top.

The cost of keeping up with the Jones's includes arteriosclerosis. The cost of failing to keep up with the Jones's is a high rate of teenage pregnancies, higher levels of crime amongst young men. The cost of a whole society thinking that keeping up with the Jones's is a worthwhile activity, appears to be higher levels of mental illness, lower social trust, increased drug use; and the rest.

Once basic needs have been met, societies without the totem pole (or a far shorter hike between bottom and top), experience empirically better life outcomes than others, for almost all citizens, than less equal societies.

At a time when we have the opportunity to remake our economy, this is a startling message to pay attention to.

A Bit of the Mission

It's the chance for a friendly chat: to sort through a particular worry, get some information, check that you are getting all the assistance you are entitled to, or help work through a decision you have to make. Sometimes it's just finding out how to contact or get help from another agency.

Our Support & Advocacy Workers have a great deal of experience in finding a way through worries, agencies and problems, so that the people we work with have the results they want.

This service is FREE; paid for by The Methodist Mission from our own funds.



The three Support & Advocacy workers are based at the Arahina Family Support Centre in Mosgiel, at our Early Learning Centre in Wesley Street, and at our Main Office in King Edward Street, South Dunedin.

Included in our Support & Advocacy service is the Home Support Service - affordable home, garden and personal help for people wanting to stay independent. Everything from 5 minute jobs to 2 day jobs, including advising you if a qualified tradesman is needed. This service is aimed at older people, however we find a wide range of individuals and families use the service.

Support & Learning - Right Now

APPROACH COMMUNITY LEARNING

Restart Your Learning!

Adult Learning • Youth Training • Family Learning • Smart Food • Edible Gardens • 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 • Family Whanau Support • Wise Up Walk Tall • OSCAR & 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 • 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.

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