

*"Like slavery and apartheid, poverty is not natural. Poverty is human-made and it can be overcome and eradicated by the actions of human beings" (Nelson Mandela).*

# Talk about poverty: Reporting back and moving forward



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## Contents

Introduction .....	4
1. Poverty in the context of history and intercultural relationships in Aotearoa.....	6
2. Poverty and the State.....	13
2.1 Social Security .....	14
2.2 Unresponsive system: A state that no longer serves.....	16
2.3 Access to services.....	20
3. Poverty and the market economy .....	24
3.1 Alternative economies .....	27
4. Poverty of work and employment .....	30
5. Poverty of housing .....	36
6. Disenfranchised youth .....	39
7. Moving forward together with hope .....	44
References: .....	46
Appendix 1: Advocacy towards ‘Economies of Hope’ .....	48



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## Introduction

Trust Waikato is an investment and funding body which helps organisations carry out charitable, cultural, philanthropic and recreational projects of benefit to people in their region. In 2009 they initiated a process of consultation about the impacts of poverty, deprivation and inequality with local community and academic advisors. They then agreed to fund a research and advocacy project that would focus on exploring these issues in the greater Waikato community.

Anna and Rose began this research and advocacy journey with Poverty Action Waikato on 22 March 2010. Since then we<sup>1</sup> have read about and talked with numbers of people in the Waikato region and nationally about issues of poverty and inequality. As we engage in talk about poverty we find there are many shades of grey and little that is black and white, concrete and definitive in this field of research and advocacy. Conceptions of poverty are relative as there appears to be always someone better or worse off than the situation in discussion at any one time. It is very difficult to compare poverties across nations and even regions within a nation as the impacts of decisions made at governmental and global levels have varied local effects.

To learn about the situations of, and issues about, poverty in the Waikato region we have engaged in many local and regional conversations with individuals and groups of people. We developed four questions to guide our conversations:

1. What aspects of poverty, deprivation and inequality do you see people, neighbourhoods and communities experiencing in their everyday lives?
2. How do people, neighbourhoods and communities manage with the poverty, deprivation and inequality they experience?
3. What inspires you to keep doing the work you do?
4. Tell us about some of the inspiring solutions to poverty, deprivation and inequality that you have seen, experienced or dream about?

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<sup>1</sup> This is a collective piece of work and the “we” refers to both Anna and Rose.

Notes were taken by Anna and Rose in some of these conversations, which we later typed up and sent back to the individuals or groups of people so that they could check them for content and accuracy. A consent form requesting permission to use the notes as part of the research material was sent to participants to sign and return. Some of the groups and people we talked to have asked not to be identified. As a way of offering some protection from recognition in this report we have used place names in quotes rather than the names of people and organisations.

These conversations, with the consent of participants, have been drawn on to form this report. All these conversations have been put together and read through for themes that reflect the various aspects of poverty that stand out and that we have become familiar with over the past year. Our developing awareness of the experiences and stories of poverty has also been informed by the various more informal conversations we have had in our workplace, Anglican Action, and with other groups and individuals we have met with over the past year. While the quotes within this report are from our recorded conversations, our analysis is informed by the wide range of conversations and literature with which we have engaged.

Poverty is experienced in many different ways and certainly involves much more than a lack of money or even economic power. There are many historical patterns of, and social aspects to, privilege and the way that poverty works that affect people in different ways. For example, the loss of access to land that had sustained iwi, hapu and whānau has had a devastating and long term impact on the ability of Māori to thrive in Aotearoa. Conversely, many of the settlers who have worked the land over the last two centuries have been able to build up considerable levels of wealth and privilege. This is an aspect of poverty we have taken into consideration as we listen to and work with the stories people tell about poverty in the Waikato.

We bring a particular worldview and theoretical understanding to this research. We believe that events, realities, meanings, and experiences are the effects of many different ways these things are spoken about (the way talk operates) in society. We believe that meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced rather than naturally occurring. As researchers we have played an active role in the analysis of the conversations we have had and have identified themes related to both the structural causes of poverty and the issues generated from these. Some of the questions that have guided our analysis include:

*How are the structural causes of poverty talked or not talked about?*

*What issues are created by the structures and policies that exist?*

*How do communities and individuals respond to the issues of poverty and inequality that they observe and witness?*

*What responses can we make to the structural causes of the issues of poverty and inequality?*

We have decided to use a series of themes, developed from our interpretations of the conversations to date, as one way to report back on the various aspect of poverty that people have discussed. The themes we have used to guide our reflections and report back are:

1. Poverty in the context of history and intercultural relationships in Aotearoa
2. Poverty and the State including talk about Social Security, an Unresponsive system: A state that no longer serves, access to services such as health, and transport barriers
3. Poverty and the market economy and some consideration of alternative economies
4. Poverty of work and employment
5. Poverty of housing, and
6. Disenfranchised youth

## **1. Poverty in the context of history and intercultural relationships in Aotearoa**

***“Poverty is people with no connection ... Poverty is about what has been taken away, it’s about what has been lost” (Thames)***

Poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand, sometimes known as the ‘land of plenty’, is difficult to comprehend for many, although living in and off this land for Māori, and later for Pākehā<sup>2</sup> settlers, has always had its challenges. People living in Aotearoa have experienced times of impoverishment such as the depression years of the 1920s and 1930s, and times of plenty from post World War two through until 1970s when trade with Britain and Europe was at its peak (Belich, 2001; King, 2003).

There is a commonly held belief that New Zealand was settled with the value of establishing an egalitarian society. That is, a society where there is a level of fair play and equality of opportunity for all to work towards a better life for themselves and their families (Belich, 2001).

Many settler peoples in Aotearoa have found this to be a great country to live in with the wealth of the country, up until the mid 1980s, being relatively well spread out. For example, there was not a great deal of difference between the rates of pay for high and low income earners and there was little unemployment. One of the significant areas of growth in Aotearoa New Zealand since the social and economic adjustments of the mid 1980s has been the increased gap between the rich and the poor, with a rise in relative wealth for a few and a considerable growth in numbers of people in relative poverty (The New Zealand Institute, 2011).

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<sup>2</sup> Pākehā is generally used in this report as the name Maori gave to the new settlers who arrived in Aotearoa

The significant growth in economic inequality was driven by a number of policy changes including: reduced tax rates for higher income groups; the privatisation of state assets; the devolving of state services to both private and community enterprise, and; the cutting and centralising of state services (Byrnes, 2009). These policy shifts, born of a 'new right' ideology and neoliberal economic theory, had the effect of concentrating wealth into particular localities and groups. Redistributive wealth policies were discounted by government in favour of policies that supported entrepreneurial activity and business growth, with economic growth heralded as a 'saviour' to cure all ills. While policies of wealth redistribution and business growth are not mutually exclusive, the ideology of the 'new right' politics saw the erosion of policies that had maintained, for Pākehā at least, a more egalitarian society.

However, the stories many Māori tell of living with settlers in Aotearoa do not always reflect the egalitarian values espoused by successive settler governments. Throughout the history of Māori and Pākehā relations, Pākehā laws and governance (Huygens, 2007) have not only excluded Māori from both their land and culture but have also afforded only marginal opportunity for Māori to participate in the capitalist economy or governance. The neoliberal policy shifts of the 1980's, however, have presented some new found, politically acceptable, opportunities for Māori. In some respects, the devolution of state services to community enterprise created space for the development of self determining Māori communities and services (Bargh and Otter, 2009).

We also recognise that not all Pākehā settler peoples have prospered well in New Zealand and their stories are threaded through this report. The exclusionary nature of market based capitalism cuts across all cultures and Pākehā are not exempt from this. Settler communities stemming from the patriarchal systems of England and other European countries have generally relegated women to 'the other' with their child raising and family support work 'counting for nothing' (Waring, 1988), while those whose work is counted were continually privileged both in terms of wealth, income and power.

In this section we focus on some of the stories shared by participants about Māori experiences of poverty and the causes they attribute to that poverty. The poverty people talked about is not always new or recent poverty but rather it is traced to patterns of settlement as the colony of New Zealand was being established.

The early years of Pākehā settlement, and in particular the confiscation and transfer of land from Māori post the 1860s New Zealand land wars (Belich, 1986; King, 2003), have had a significant and lasting effect on Māori prosperity throughout the greater Waikato and Hauraki regions.

*The causes of poverty are about being disenfranchised, about tangata whenua and land confiscation. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We were reminded that access to land and sea were crucial to the sustenance of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world). There were many abundant 'food baskets' through the Waikato and Hauraki that served to sustain the way of life of the people both local and visitors.

*Pākehā subdivided Maori land, and took away the Māori resource base. Māori access to kai was taken away. The advice of Kaumātua was to not tell Pākehā where the food sources were, as then it may be taken away and you will have nothing to feed your family – this had been the experience of how Pākehā had acted when learning of food sources. Land loss has had a huge impact on Māori whānau who were living off the land. Poverty is about what has been taken away, it's about what has been lost. (Thames, Hauraki)*

The term and concept of poverty was related to a Pākehā cultural frame. There was considerable resistance to poverty defined in only financial terms as poverty is culturally experienced and understood.

*Poverty is Pākehā terminology. What other people see as poverty isn't what I see. Poverty is people with no connection. Not having enough money is the way of the times. Maori are rich in culture and connection and lived off the sea and the land. Their playgrounds and sources of kai have gone. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*The gap in material wealth is getting bigger and with this the gap between Māori and Pākehā. However, Māori have whakawhanaungatanga. We are more connected with the people around us...We have' Whare Tapa Whā<sup>3</sup> model. We are rich in culture. It comes back to values, and what you value. Who is measuring the inequality? (Thames, Hauraki).*

The importance of people being able to name their own poverties rather than having the imposition of judgment from outsiders was discussed.

*When poverty is understood in a material sense, you might see a front lawn not mowed and judge a family to be in poverty. Yet this family may be living richly every day. You cannot make judgments from the outside - you have to know what is happening inside the house. (Thames, Hauraki)*

There was considerable resistance to the definition of poverty in material terms. Poverty is not about living with less but perhaps more about the sense of power control one may experience in

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<sup>3</sup> Mason Durie's Whare Tapa Whā model of health (1998), describes four components, which represent the four walls of a house and the idea that if one of these walls fails, the house will fall.



life. We heard of the wealth of Māori culture, and of the richness that comes when Māori culture can be lived. We see the tension between a desire for a Māori world, but the lack of economic support undermining the viability of Māori ways of being.

*Some Māori families, because of the lack of affordable rental accommodation, have gone to their land and now live in shacks, with eight children in one bedroom and a long drop as their only toilet, no running water or electricity. The children are happy though as they are living in a whānau environment. (Coromandel)*

*When we lived off the land, it was nothing to wear second-hand clothes and shoes. You may have had jandals but you wouldn't wear them. Our Nana had a pension and there were four of us to feed – it was possible. I remember we had a little cake and we divided it into 4 pieces. My Dad grew up in the Coromandel. There were 10 in the house. They would walk Tiki Road to school. There was a pair of shoes if you wanted them. You had a roof over your head and you were okay. My partner is Pākehā. There were 8 of them. 4 of them had shoes. The house was nice and warm and they had clothes and food. (Thames, Hauraki)*

Our conversations with people in the social service sector highlighted that racism is a factor in many of our state institutions. Racism means that all people are expected to conform to the institutional and systems practices of the dominant cultural group (we are all ONE people) that have the power in a society (Black, 2010). People from cultural groups with different practices are generally not fully accepted for whom they are culturally or able to perform their own practices alongside or within the institutional structures of a racist society. Racism brings a devastating poverty of identity and opportunity. The excluding effects of racism were described in the following ways:

*When I was growing up, racism was a part of life. My teachers were racist. The teachers did not want to teach the Māori kids. This hasn't really changed. (Thames, Hauraki).*

*There are very few Māori employed by our local council. There are no Māori on the council. There was a pōwhiri for new board members but the whānau were not asked. To get a voice in local politics you have to be radical and push your way in. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*Why is Te Reo Māori an extracurricular activity? And now there are Pākehā teaching Māori how to speak Te Reo Māori – this is hard to accept when it was Pākehā systems that for so long forbade the speaking of Te Reo Māori in schools. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*Just recently I have had a client cancel their booking. I asked why and it was because I said "Kia Ora" on the phone. I never decline a client. I sent around our assessor who is Pākehā and it was fine. (Thames, Hauraki)*

Addressing racism is not about the Pākehā system becoming more tolerant of Māori but instead about the development of a system that is equally supportive and generative of every person being who they are culturally. The dominance of a Pākehā knowledge and cultural ways of being pervade the structural systems in Aotearoa, and functions as a source of privilege for many Pākehā. The following quotes describe the dominance of a Pākehā ways of knowing and doing and how this can undermine the Māori ways of achieving both sustenance and development.

*Now there are limits on how many pipi we can collect. This used to be the way for Māori – we used to collect big bags. That was how we did it. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*We have had many legislative changes that have affected us. Our old people back off from being involved in teaching because they have been forced to by the legislation. You used to go into the Kōhanga Reo and see lots of kaiako, but now they have to get a piece of paper, a teaching certificate. This seems to be about Pākehā control and ongoing colonization. The kaiako used to be able to teach but now they need a plaque to teach. It seems that the process has been pushed the other way – toward getting qualifications rather than toward valuing the teaching and learning through whānau and intergenerational learning. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*Who say someone is in poverty? Who gets to say? Through whose eyes is poverty seen? The framework of living is Pākehā and there is racism in this. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard of shame. We heard of the effects of power inequality where beliefs of individualism and equality of opportunity have the insidious effect of generating a mentality of blame. When an individual is unable to achieve economic success in the capitalist world they are blamed for their inadequacies. We heard of poverty understood as a reflection of self worth and of failure and the shame of being excluded, when exclusion is taken to be personal failure.

*People who are excluded don't always look you in the eye. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard of work that attempts to address a poverty of spirit and identity and the sense of blame that is perpetuated by the system and dominant group. The following quotes describe liberating approaches to education and social change.

*Our work helps with breaking down the misconceptions, and the acceptance that poverty is the way it is. There is work in breaking down history and their story - the stories*

*that normalize the poverty. People have to come to understand their story and what it means to them. (Coromandel)*

*The emphasis in the counselling work is on going right back to issues of identity – looking at where we came from. To ask what causes me to behave the way I do in a historical sense? It's about letting the people talk through their stories as they do. With one story you might end up in 1835 at the Declaration of Independence, and with another somewhere else. Everyone has their own story. (Coromandel)*

*We need to embrace our Kaumātua. Our Kaumātua have a lot of knowledge and wisdom to share. They can teach about parenting each other, loving each other, life skills teaching. We need to bring Kaumātua and Rangatahi together and encourage the doing of things together. The teaching around harekeke is not just weaving – it is the korero that goes alongside (Thames, Hauraki).*

People talked of the need to celebrate cultures as a way to support cultural identity and spirit:

*We need to celebrate Māori heroes, particularly local people such as artist Rei Hamon. These are stories that can inspire the younger generations to reach for their own dreams and set goals for their lives. (Coromandel)*

*We just held a National Cook Island Dance Competition....The competition provided an opportunity for young people to show case their talent and build on their cultural identity. (Tokoroa)*

The recognition of culture and the celebrations of cultural performance are experienced as ways to strengthen identities. With support a strengthened sense of identity can lead to new approaches to self and life.

In this section, we have given particular attention to some of the stories that reflect the consequences of unequal intercultural relationships and unequal distribution of land and resources through the processes of colonisation and settlement in Aotearoa.

We decided to highlight talk about history and structural elements of power and governance in Aotearoa New Zealand as some of the current aspects of poverty can be traced through the impacts of intercultural relationships between Māori and Pākehā over time. The mono-cultural dominance of successive Western focussed and Pākehā controlled governments is a deeply disturbing aspect of poverty that has a huge impact on the inter-cultural relationships between dominant groups and indigenous peoples. The emphasis on individual ownership and the dismantling of systems of collective ownership are fundamental aspects of the unequal ways in which resources, including land, food, education, health and social services are accessed and distributed, are predicated on these unequal relationships.

British and European settlers brought capitalism, or the economy of the marketplace, to this land (Sinclair, 2000). The challenge for capitalist nations today is perhaps to begin to notice the ways in which Earth's abundance is organised, and what values are upheld when resources are distributed as they are. Land, wealth and culture do not sit separately. It is with realising the connections that we can open up the possibilities for economies that support all people and peoples.

The challenge to those of us who are members of dominant groups is to take up the call to 'do unto others as we would have done to us'. To see our privilege for what it is and what it does. We are calling for a serious examination of our privileged access to resources and cultural dominance through a social justice lens. We will focus our work to ensure that the privileges of access to culture, resources and services we experience, are extended with equity to all peoples who share this land.

***Statistics that help us tell this story:***

- *Since the establishment of a Westminster style government in Aotearoa New Zealand through the 1852 New Zealand Constitution Act (Huygens, 2007), Māori have been progressively alienated from 95% of their land (Knox, 2005).*
- *Only 0.4% of Māori land is classified as prime, having virtually no limitations to arable use (Knox, 2005).*
- *Members of the dominant groups often say they do not have a culture, rather they consider themselves to be 'normal' (Black, 1997, 2010).*
- *The Waikato Region has the fourth-highest proportion of Māori residents who speak te reo Māori (25%) out of all regions in New Zealand, behind Gisborne, Bay of Plenty and Northland (Environment Waikato, 2010).*
- *A 2011 public opinion survey found the number of New Zealanders who had a good understanding of the Treaty of Waitangi fell slightly, from 41 per cent to 39 per cent (Human Rights Commission, 2011).*
- *The number of Māori elected to local government remains far lower than their proportion of the population: in the 2007 local government elections less than five per cent of successful candidates were Māori, although Māori form nearly 15 per cent of the population. Many Councils have no Māori members at all (Human Rights Commission, 2010).*
- *Over 30% of our population is Māori, yet there is no Māori representation on our local council (Te Kuiti Youth Forum, 2011)*
- *Only 26 per cent of people taking part in a nationwide poll agreed with the statement "The treaty relationship between the Crown and Māori is healthy" (Human Right Commission, 2011).*

## 2. Poverty and the State

The notion of a 'cradle to the grave' welfare system in Aotearoa was described by Bronwyn Labrum (2009) as a fundamental vision that many New Zealanders still hold of their society. The reality, however, of the state provision of welfare has moved from a relatively generous provision of 'social security' in the mid-twentieth century to providing a minimal 'safety net' since 1991. The growth of market based economies from the 1980s meant that social security was changed from "a 'symbol of citizenship' to a 'badge of poverty'" (Labrum, 2009, p.420).

Since the 1990s Social services have been increasingly contracted out to 'voluntary' sector organisations. The funder-provider split model was instigated where separate organisations were set up to a) fund services, and to b) provide services. Assistance through 'charity' particularly by way of foodbanks to bridge the gap of inadequate state benefits and low wages has become commonplace.

We heard of the gap between state systems and the needs of the people. We heard about the insecurity of state funding and lack of consultation.

*The stringent, inflexible and short term funding contracts administered by government leave community groups saying feeling as if they are "set up to fail" (Tokoroa).*

The community service funding environment appears lacking in funder/provider relationships. A programme administrator reflected that one of their programmes had been cut 'simply because' it had effectively met the current needs of the community. The programme appeared to have been considered no longer necessary, even though the needs were ongoing. Another participant talked about the need for clients to "act unwell" so they could maintain the funding that was supporting their wellness. The often short term contracting environment of social service provision displays a lack of comprehension of the long standing and ongoing needs required to maintain social support and wellbeing in communities. This may lead to poor funding decisions.

The strengthening of relationships between the funder and provider of services would potentially service the community's interest. Phil Harrington (2008) in a review of the book "New Zealand, new welfare" suggested that:

Active engagement between officials and clients of a welfare system enables assessment, planning, linking and monitoring to become the basis of welfare practice. While on the one hand, through case management, an official may closely support a client to devise a way to make gains, it is also possible for data and policies for local and regional initiative to become the basis for local solutions (p.122).

People who are more involved with the lived realities of people often have creative ideas for how services can be improved for the benefit of both the people and the service, as illustrated by the following quote:

*How can we provide some kind of insurance policy and embed this into the benefit, so that people have some sort of back-up when things go wrong, when something breaks, because that's what gets people (Thames).*

This quote reflects the reality of low income people where neither wages nor benefits provide a level of income that allows for savings that might cover the cost of repairs to appliances such as washing machines, or for the payment of insurance policies. The idea of insurance as a collective pool of funds that contributors can draw on in times of need is similar to the way in which many credit unions operate and could be set up through the state sector to provide for the needs of low income people. At the moment they are often living in debt to loan sharks who charge exorbitant interest rates.

## 2.1 Social Security

We heard of the inadequacy of benefits relative to increases in the cost of living. There is a general consensus that benefits need to be increased. Although examples were noted where addictions, albeit enabled and supported through the alcohol, drug and gambling industries, along with a constant stream of product advertising, preclude a responsible use of income. It was suggested that the wider economic context of society be considered for those receiving benefits. In previously more buoyant economic conditions, people on benefits may have been able to find some supplementary income through paid work. This is not the case in the current economic environment of where work is difficult to secure.

*Benefits are dropping behind every year. Benefits are not keeping up with the costs of living (Thames, Hauraki).*

*I agree that benefits need wrenching up. There are some people who need to look at how they use their resources – money goes on addictions (Hamilton).*

*Benefits are not enough. If people could earn the \$100 extra, but the casual work has gone, the part-time work has gone. Unemployment has gone up. So talking of getting beneficiaries working is not a helpful conversation to be having right now. DPB is still tight. In the end if anything goes wrong, if the wheels come off – the extras such as fixing things or school camps for kids are the problem. Since the 1991 Benefit cuts – the cost of living has increased but there has been no jack up (Hamilton).*

When the National Party swept into power in 1991 one of their responses to a tight economic situation in New Zealand was to cut the benefit amounts being paid to people. Since that time it has been very difficult to live adequately on a benefit as relative to average incomes (Welfare Justice, 2010) and increases in the cost of living the level of benefit payment has dropped.

There was frequent discussion of the situations that make life both demanding and financially unmanageable on a benefit. Debt can at times be created through the inadequacy of benefits to meet the costs of living and the subsequent management of debt can be difficult.

*I had a 'brilliant client' who walked everywhere. She had a stroller and put the child on one side and the groceries in the other. I asked her about getting to the hospital for her heart treatment, but the client said that she could walk, and if she got wet, she would go home and change. I had the greatest admiration for that girl. Everything was for the kids. (Hamilton)*

*The longer you are on a benefit, the less stretch you have. It gets harder and harder. Debt management is huge for people on benefits. It is hard work being on a benefit (Hamilton).*

*One involves a woman who is 19 and who had a baby at 18. She had been living at home, but is now moving out. The budget advisor looked at her budget and she is \$13 dollars a week short before she begins to live. She gets \$461 a week. She would get more if she could name the father. Her rent is 69% of her income. Years ago people were advised by banks etc that rent should be only 25% of their income. (Hamilton)*

We heard how the benefit abatement thresholds and the low wage economy can, in some cases, support a choice to remain on a benefit instead of looking for work. The incentive to work is compromised by the system.

*We often see families on benefits getting \$800/week – that can be more than families who work. If you have a child with asthma then you get a child disability allowance –there are a lot of add-ons. If you have an HP and can't pay it, then you can get temporary assistance. Some of our clients say "it is better for me to be on a benefit than work" which is common and true in some cases. (Hamilton)*

*There is inequity between people who work on low wages and beneficiaries. It is not uncommon to see someone on a benefit with 5 or more children receiving \$1000 per week, while someone in a similar circumstance, working a 40 hours week, could be earning \$600. (Hamilton)*

The State provisions of benefits for people who for various reasons are not able to be in paid work are necessary for social security. Managing a system of benefit provision at a level that is adequate to meet the needs of those receiving a benefit and is also comparable with the wages that working people earn is a complex challenge. The 'working for families' scheme is one of the systems that the Labour Government put in place to ensure that low income earners who work and support families were receiving a higher level of take home pay albeit from a low income base. There is an argument that the 'working for families' scheme acts as a subsidy to employers which serves to maintain a low wage economy.

## 2.2 Unresponsive system: A state that no longer serves

*Sometimes it feels like the system is not there for the people. (Coromandel)*

As we talked to people, particularly those living and working in regional towns away from Hamilton City, we heard many stories of a distant and relatively unresponsive state system. Services available in smaller and more distant towns were fragmented and often difficult to access.

There was a sense in which the state services were not there to serve the needs being expressed by the people. Difficulties were expressed across a range of services including housing; health; transport; work and income; and child, youth and family. Most of the difficulties relate to a gap in relationship between the policies and provision of state services and the needs being expressed by local people. Even the requirements for first contact with a government department were very difficult for many people. Often they called on local non-government sector agencies to help facilitate contact with government services. Local body services and organisations appeared to be easier to access than Government Departments.

One woman reflected on how a number of government departments had been engaged in responding to pertinent housing needs in her area, and of the limited response given.

*CYFs and Housing NZ did a report on people's living conditions four years ago. They had a certain amount of money to spend. Some money was used for putting toilets into existing, but often substandard houses. (Coromandel)*

While the toilets went a small way to improving living conditions, they did not fulfill the need for warm, dry, healthy homes for people to live in, however remote they might be.



A lack of response to research reports has led to feelings of distrust, as evidenced by the following quote:

*We have had many people like you come and then they go away again and nothing changes. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*Has poverty become an intellectual exercise? We see that happen. The intellectual exercise becomes part of the industry. (Thames, Hauraki)*

These statements are a challenge to researchers, ourselves included, to think about what our research might do to promote ways in which services are provided in communities. They are also a reminder that research is viewed as a luxury to many people who have limited access to basic resources. People are expressing a desire for change but research is not necessarily regarded as a tool that will support the changes they seek.

We heard of advocacy to government through Members of Parliament (MPs) but the advocacy appears to have little effect as little seems to change with the limited level of service available in small centres.

*It is nonsensical that the WINZ service infrastructure is in the Coromandel but that local people have to travel to Thames. I have taken this issue to Sandra Goudie (National MP for Coromandel) and she took the issue to Paula Bennett (Minister for Social Development and Employment). (Coromandel)*

In the Coromandel we heard that WINZ did have a local office which was open a couple of days a week by people who travelled there from Thames. However, the service offered was limited service as WINZ staff visiting the Coromandel could not sign people onto new benefits. To get a benefit people, such as those out of work, had to travel the Thames for appointments with WINZ staff and that may involve two or three 80 km or more round trips for those with very limited resources and limited access to transport.

Advocacy to MPs is a common tool used by services such as budgeting advice to try and get information out about what is happening to people in communities. They advocate from a position of knowledge and experience yet there is a sense that the information they present is not acted upon.

*I frequently advocate to the local MPs for change. Prior to the recession I was asking the MPs to put more controls on the finance sector. (Hamilton)*

We heard of successful programmes being cut with no declaration of the decision making processes that led to cuts, and often despite deliberate and time intensive advocacy.

*We never get to hear about the rationale behind decisions– the process, the science, the basis of the decision making... we worked hard to advocate for the programme. We brought the politicians in and showed them around. We worked hard to maintain the funding. (Tokoroa)*

*I heard of the economic benefit of the ACE programmes and the following year the funding was cut. (Coromandel)*

*There was an enterprise scheme in the community, run by the MSD – it was working. The scheme employed 11 people but they cut the funding. The people employed were unemployable. (Thames, Hauraki)*

Systemic practices such as the three year election cycle often has an impact on the availability of funding for programmes, particularly when governments change.

We heard of restrictive, stringent, prescriptive funding requirements and a devaluing of stories and relationship, with a funder preference for quantifiable need.

*Crime is under-reported here. There is community policing. The community police officer does a good job, but he knows everyone. We can't get a good sense of what is going on without better reporting. We can't get the funding we need for programmes without the stats to illustrate our needs. (Coromandel)*

*District nurses provide a good service – they go out to the community, but they are stretched. They are more restricted in what they can do now than they used to be. What they can do is more and more prescribed. The numbers of reporting requirements have gone up. The admin and travel time of a District Nurse is not accounted for. (Tokoroa)*

We heard how there was a need for intensive individual advocacy work on behalf of clients by local service providers to government departments.

*We get involved with clients when they are at the edge. We have all been involved at some point as an advocate to WINZ. If the person had had their basic entitlement from WINZ they would not have got to the edge. (Tokoroa)*

*A big part of our work is helping clients understand what is being done to them. (Coromandel)*

*There is a lot of interpretive work involved with the service. The service advocates to all government departments on behalf of their clients. (Coromandel)*

We heard of a restricted ability to have voice when in receipt of a government contract. State funding appears to reduce the capacity for services to both respond and voice discontent.

*There is a culture in government that you are not allowed to do some things – they say “our hands are tied”. (Tokoroa)*

We heard how vulnerable people work to maximise their quality of life, often through collective shared living arrangements. However, there are restrictions put in place that require beneficiaries to operate as individuals.

*In order to afford rents, people have moved in together. But if you have more than two people on a benefit living in the same house then only one person can receive the accommodation benefit. (Coromandel)*

We heard how the ways in which staff in Government departments carry out their work seems to preclude the development of effective working relationships with clients on an ongoing basis.

*WINZ clients do not get to see the same case manager. The WINZ process does not breed familiarity. (Coromandel)*

We heard how a lack of relationships of support and co-ordination can lead to isolation and a lack of access to services.

*There is transport that can be accessed but having to pay for it or finding volunteers to drive it are barriers... again there is transport available but they don't want to be a bother. (Coromandel)*

*One family I saw recently – Mum, Dad and three kids – they were living in one room because the house leaked. They did not have knowledge of where to go for help. It was by sheer chance that they came to our beneficiary advocacy service and we could help them. (Thames, Hauraki).*

We heard how a loss of government services such as support for community education classes results in poverty of relationship as people become isolated in their own homes.

*There are people getting isolated in their homes due to a lack of transport and community education. (Coromandel)*

We heard of instances where many forms of social support in communities are now available through programmes as access to funding for programmes is often easier to obtain than funding for more generalised support and activities of traditional community organisations. The need to enrol in and go to a 'programme' can put undue pressure on already vulnerable people. Rather than support being generated and provided through relationships in community, support is now largely provided through programmes, initiatives and services.

*Often people don't have the confidence to go and enrol themselves in programmes... If you aren't going out and interacting you lose confidence... We need to reach the ones that aren't (accessing community resources). It gets to be a scary thing to go out if you haven't been doing so. (Coromandel)*

*We have seen scheme upon scheme. I'm not sure that any scheme will crack it. There is 10-15% of the population that no-one is getting to. To get onto one of those enterprise schemes you need to be a high functioning person. I'm not sure what the answer is. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*We have programmes like the quit card. But people need to go into the pharmacy for this and we don't realize how hard this is for some people to do. The services are there but people are not able to access them. (Thames, Coromandel)*

In this section we have highlighted a number of ways in which people in regional towns and communities experience state organisations as being unresponsive to their needs. Interactions between centralised government departments are talked about as being distant from the needs of people living in smaller regional towns and communities. A degree of frustration was expressed regarding the lack of effective communication with government agents such as MPs and people in departments. Short term and sometimes erratic funding of local services and programmes is an ongoing and time consuming challenge for social service agencies. Many of these factors are seen as underpinning the problems people have in accessing Government services.

### **2.3 Access to services**

We heard of absent or dwindling services based in regional towns, such as Government departments and health, resulting in the need for people to travel to larger centres to access services. We heard of the pressure that people feel in travelling large distances to be able to access the support needed.

*The lack of WINZ services in the Coromandel does not make sense. (Coromandel)*

*We have very few government services based locally – No IRD, no ACC, no HNZ – all these agencies have people who come and visit. And then people have no transport. There is huge lack of access to government services. Issues of access to services are not well understood. Access is compromised all the time. Compromised access is another form of gate keeping. (Tokoroa)*

This need to travel presents logistical difficulties particularly for people in communities where there has been a decline in local employment opportunities. The decline in employment opportunities has meant that many of the 'wage earners' in smaller towns leave to get work elsewhere. This can leave towns with a disproportionate number of people who then rely on benefits, including superannuation, as their means of support. The flow on effect of losing wage earners often means that a limited pool of people with enough resource to provide voluntary support such as transport is available.

We heard how life can be severely compromised by a lack of local services and local knowledge, particularly emergency services. At times a high degree of community response is required for services to function effectively.

*The ambulance service needs to find out where people live as there have been times when they have been getting lost lately. There are a lot of outlying settlements in this area and they do not seem to have good maps of the remote rural roads – this is not good enough. Often someone is sent to a bigger road junction to wait for the ambulance so that it gets to the person faster (Coromandel).*

A lack of local service provision has, in effect, created a larger need for transport with time and distance being real difficulties for rural communities in terms of accessing services. The service may be more economically efficient when agglomerated to a main centre. The costs of the service provider may have reduced, but the access costs in terms of time and money have been shifted to service users. Those who live in places some distance from the centralised services are left to carry the costs of these cuts.

However, it is not economically or socially efficient for people in smaller communities to travel up to 3 hours to access a service. Transport expenses are not recognised by the government services and there is little or no provision for them. The lack of comprehensive service provision has negative impacts on the community in varying ways including the erosion of once quality services.

*Plunket travel time is also not recognized. If the nurse has 8 visits in town that's okay – but travel time is not factored in when visiting in rural areas. Plunket used to be a top quality service (Tokoroa).*

*Hospital services have been wilted away – it is “death by 1000 cuts.” ....The loss of hospital services is one of the biggest things to spark community anger (Tokoroa).*

A lack of public transport, regardless of service availability, makes a life with limited financial capacity very challenging and exclusionary:

*If, for example, you are a parent with more than two kids, it is hard to get places without a car. Taxis in Thames are expensive. If it is raining and you have a doctor’s appointment, it is difficult for you to get there. You may have friends and family to call on, but it is still difficult. The lack of transport affects our young people too. It prevents people from getting involved. Some parents will help their children to get there, but some kids can’t get there. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard how a lack of adequate public transport and an over-reliance on a car can be the undoing of a beneficiary.

*Cars are the undoing of beneficiaries. Benefits are designed to pay for the necessities of life, not for cars and HPs. A lot of our clients, often it is beneficiaries, drive around in cars without warrants and a current registration and are paying off fines. They just cannot afford the cost of keeping it on the road legally (Hamilton).*

In many regional cities and towns there is very little offered in the way of affordable and timely public transport. While there is a good deal of emphasis placed on private vehicle ownership, building roads and catching people who do not keep up to date with warrants of fitness and registrations for vehicles, there is less value placed on the state provision of transport for people who cannot afford to own and run their own vehicles.

Over the last thirty years there have been many changes to Government policies which inform and guide the provision of services to people. The decrease in available ‘paid work’ opportunities combined with lack of government services in smaller centres are the cold face of overriding market preferred, economic growth driven, policies of economic agglomeration.

**Statistics that help us tell this story:**

- *Waitomo and South Waikato Districts have a relatively high percentage of the population in households without a motor vehicle. In 2001, more than a third of preschool children in South Waikato in one parent households do not have a motor vehicle in the household (Population Studies Centre, 2005).*
- *The largest increase in public servants in the 2007/8 year (471) was in the Department of Corrections as a result of the Spring Hill and Otago Regional Corrections Facilities – all 'frontline' positions (PSA, November 2008)*
- *In 1987, there was one public servant for every 46 New Zealanders; now it's about one for every 100 (PSA, 2011)*
- *Gross national debt, in 2010, was 28.4 percent of GDP. This is the fourth lowest level of gross national debt in the OECD. In 1999, debt was 35.2 percent of GDP (Harris, 2010).*

### 3. Poverty and the market economy

“Dysfunctional disunity” is how one participant described his community. We believe that dysfunctional communities are in part the fall out of the structural economic changes that have occurred in Aotearoa, New Zealand since the 1980s. These structural changes, some of which we described earlier, are a result of neo-liberal ‘new right’ ideology principally driven by people in positions of power in the business sector. These New Right policies are non-interventionist, preferring both a limited state and limited state economic regulation. Economic inequality has resulted from neo-liberal policies which encourage competitive relationships and consumption, both of which are valued by people principally concerned with consumer led economic growth.

Rising economic inequality, combined with unregulated market processes and limited state services, have affected the social configuration of New Zealand society.

*In the 1960’s Raglan was 50% Maori and 50% Pākehā, the community had a strong heart and functioned well. Now most of the Maori and many Pākehā have left. Of those who have decided to stay, some residents can be found living in garages and cold drafty older houses. Substandard housing results in a raft of health conditions including asthma and swollen joints. The once strong community heart is disappearing from the town as the local population declines, and a dysfunctional community is being created – dysfunction and disunity. (Raglan)*

We have heard numerous suggestions throughout the region that housing and transport are the two most prevalent and concerning social issues, particularly in rural Waikato communities. We suggest that the economic policies of agglomeration; the drive to efficiency; the preference for market based provision of basic needs; and government cut-backs in local health and human service provision have compounded to create the issues of both inadequate housing and transport.

Capitalist economies tend to encourage values of individualism and consumption. What you would like to do, and what you do, in terms of career and ‘paid work’ are common social questions. Pākehā values and work-based identity are embedded in the mainstream education system. The following quote highlights the dominance of capitalist culture:

*My kids will come back home one day and make a difference. Right now they are not ready. Right now my children are living in the western world and are earning the big money. Their focus is on their careers, on getting educated and getting jobs. They have been educated in a Pākehā system. When my daughter is 40 she will come back. (Thames, Hauraki)*



We heard people who administer benefits and budgeting advice describe what they observe as 'sense of entitlement' amongst benefit recipients.

*People come in for food. They have used their WINZ chits. I ask 'what has gone wrong this time?' They don't want to have to justify themselves to you. They know that an expense is coming but they do not make allowances. They think we owe it to them. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We suggest that this sense of entitlement is not unique to beneficiaries but rather there is a widespread view in our society where people believe they deserve to have material possessions (e.g. the latest mobile phone or flat screen television). Money and material possessions are commonly understood and marketed to be the principal way of achieving a form of social security. Competition and individualism are the primary values embedded in a market based consumer society and the perpetuation of these values are a requirement for ongoing, consumer-led economic growth. With both government and corporations dedicated to encouraging consumption and economic growth, a 'sense of entitlement' along with a mentality to 'get what you can' develops. People who receive benefits are not isolated from the pervasiveness of these values and mentalities. A ruthless sense of both entitlement to, and eagerness for, financial return, is observed most starkly in the financial sector and has many negative implications for ordinary people.

*The availability of credit cards, from banks and shops like Farmers and the Warehouse, can be a real problem for people, for example, a young woman with three different cards from different banks and owing \$10,000. (Hamilton)*

The lack of government response to the regulation of this financial sector was questioned.

*The government could have slammed the finance industry – that they could have regulated it much better. Everyday people have had their savings wiped out. The government is reluctant to put in controls. Regulation is not a bad thing if it protects people and in the case of the finance industry they have done little to protect their investors. (Hamilton)*

The current emphasis on market based economies and notions that the 'market rules' make it more difficult to listen to arguments for greater regulation of the sale of products. Policies of product regulation are usually highly contested as we have experienced in New Zealand with the tobacco and alcohol industries. While tobacco and alcohol products are legal they also have potentially harmful and addictive effects on people and on society as a whole. These products

and the ways in which they are marketed are the subject of much debate. Without some form of regulation in the market place these products do have deleterious effects on the community, that compound the affects of poverty.

*If people's wallets were not sucked dry by tobacco they would be able to afford good food. At one of our local diaries the sale of bread and milk went down when the tax on tobacco increased. (Thames, Hauraki)*

One participant described the proliferation of liquor outlets in his town, while another reflected on the availability of services to assist with those affected by addictive products but not so many places for kids to have fun.

*There are 5 liquor outlets (3 hotels, Price Cutter grocery store, and Gold Diggers) and only 1400 people in Coromandel town. I ask 'where does our consumable dollar go? (Coromandel)*

*My 9 year old queried why in Thames we have so many things to help with alcohol abuse and gambling but nowhere to have fun? (Thames, Hauraki).*

The proliferation of liquor outlets in communities is concerning especially given the recent findings of a study undertaken in Manukau City (Cameron et. al, 2010). This study found that higher liquor outlet density is associated with higher numbers of total police events, anti-social behaviour, dishonesty offences, drug and alcohol offences, family violence, property abuse, property damage, sexual offences, violent crime, traffic offences and motor vehicle accidents.

People reflected on the increase of dependence on money as a means of transaction for individuals and communities. We heard observations that people no longer have either the access to land and sea or the life skills required to work with the natural environment to meet their basic sustenance needs. Money is required for survival as people have to purchase their food in the market place.

*One of the barriers to eating good food is being able to afford it. In the western world, it takes money to have access to good food and many people lack enough money to do that. So there is a financial issue. (Thames, Hauraki)*

People suggested that there has been a generation where life skills, such as growing, harvesting and preparing food, have not been passed on. With the increased availability of food and clothing markets, the skills to make and grow your own products have perhaps diminished in value and are regarded as less imperative to the achievement of livelihood, most notably for people in more affluent groups. However, the do it yourself set of life skills are important for the sustenance and

growth of communities and in particular those with limited financial affluence. Further, the social and environmental value of these skills and activities are once again being recognised as valuable. Growing your own lettuce, for example, may not be a worthwhile economic choice but there are environmental and social benefits attached to the process. We sense some dissatisfaction with the vulnerability of money dependent lifestyles subject to fluctuating markets and market prices. The benefits of life skills are experienced at an individual level, and also at a community level.

*But there is more in gardening than economics – there is the ability to be self sufficient, there is looking after papatūānuku. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*There is more abundance than you realise if we all shared what was available. We used to share kai. It is not always cheaper to grow gardens – the value is in the learning to grow food. (Thames, Hauraki)*

There are many programmes that look to impart life skills. However, life skills are described in the following quote as traditionally embedded in whānau or community relationship.

*We need to embrace our Kaumātua. Our Kaumātua have a lot of knowledge and wisdom to share. They can teach about parenting each other, loving each other, life skills teaching. We need to bring Kaumātua and Rangatahi together and encourage the doing of things together. The teaching around harekeke is not just weaving – it is the korero that goes alongside. (Thames, Hauraki)*

Relationship is perhaps not always a valued or recognized component of life skill programmes. The fracturing of intergenerational relationships has affected the transference of life skills from one generation to the next. People often have had to move away from their home communities to access both education and employment, and that along with deference to the market based provision of sustenance has served to disrupt relationships and undervalue life skills.

### **3.1 Alternative economies**

We heard of the economies of poverty, where people without access to, or participation in the mainstream economy, develop alternative economies.

*In prison food is a tradable commodity. Food is a powerful resource in prisons. If you work in the kitchen then you hide the food in your clothes and trade the food. Different types of economies emerge with poverty. Poverty is a way of life.*

We heard of an economy of frugality and humility amongst people who are making do with very little.

*Some people out there will only have a couple of slices of bread left but they will not ask for help. People try and make do (Coromandel).*

We also heard of the economies of crime, including drug trading, that develop in the face of poverty. With a lack of participatory opportunity, and increasing barriers to government services, the choices available to someone for meeting their basic needs are limited.

*He stole a roast leg of lamb. He is now 20. He has had a baby. He said 'I have to feed the family. (Coromandel)*

*If you can't get your basic entitlement from WINZ you live off the family or you live off crime. (Tokoroa)*

Participation in the economies of illegal drug trading as a response to poverty and exclusion has many negative ramifications. Cannabis is a well understood and known economy of poverty.

*We had the grocery store here for some years and one thing we noticed was – 'when the POT plants got raided the grocery accounts took longer to be paid. (Coromandel)*

The illicit drug P (methamphetamine) has also become more prevalent in recent years and its devastation is highlighted in the following quote:

*P wrecks families. The impact on incomes is huge. There are a lot of P busts up here. P is so available these days – it's everywhere. P. generally has the effect on people of suppressing appetite, they become sleep deprived, and it can make them paranoid. People will go to great lengths to obtain P. – sometimes not paying their rent, or buying food in favour of buying P. Once you are addicted you have to have it...It has been difficult for people on benefits to afford [P], but the sellers cut it up into smaller amounts so that the beneficiaries can afford it. The sellers are ruthless. P pushers get kids hooked at 12 and then they have a client for life. (Coromandel)*

The values of the capitalist market are prevalent and pervasive in Aotearoa New Zealand. A government commitment to consumer-led economic growth and unregulated markets has seen not only a drive to create commodities and sell commodities but a somewhat reckless pursuit of money and economic growth. The prioritising of profit before people is illustrated in an extract taken from an interview with Fonterra reported in Waikato Region Economy-Environment Futures Report.

A key change in dairy processing over the next 10-20 years will be the increased mechanization of processing, packaging and laboratory work, resulting in possible

reduction in local employment. This process is already well underway (an example was given of a dairying packaging plant that employed 18 workers 8 years ago, and now, employs only one) and is likely to accelerate into the future (Environment Waikato, 2006. p.25).

The value of mechanisation to increase profits over the value of providing employment for people is clearly apparent and yet remains unquestioned in this quote. Fonterra was set up to be internationally competitive and to make a profit in the market place. There is much more emphasis in 21<sup>st</sup> century western societies for people and business to participate in the global market place with economic growth being predicated on the increasing consumption of material goods and services. The market place determines the price of goods and services but does not include values such as equality or equity of access – those that can pay receive. As markets have become the chief way of distributing resources in communities, this has resulted in an increasing gap between rich and poor. The commitment of government policies to economic growth and economic return above all else may have created some jobs for various periods of time. However, the fluctuating and vulnerable commodity markets do not appear to deliver social security, or take full responsibility for the environmental impacts of work and industry. For these reasons, we are interested in the development of economies that are principally concerned with the wellbeing of peoples and planet.

#### **Statistics that help us tell the story**

- *The economy of the South Waikato district has undergone significant change in recent years. Employment in forestry, wood and paper manufacturing declined from 2,870 jobs (32% of total employment) to 1,640 jobs (20% of total employment) between 2001 and 2007. Dairy cattle farming employment increased from 500 to 620 jobs between 2001 and 2007. This was not enough to offset the decline in forestry and total employment declined by 10% (Environment Waikato, 2009).*
- *Local production and wealth generation does not always translate into local jobs. Thames-Coromandel also produces the majority of fishing output for the region (\$60 million). However, fishing only employs 1.3 per cent of the local labour force (Environment Waikato, 2009).*
- *There has been a significant increase in income inequality in New Zealand since 1991. For the Waikato region, between 1991 and 2001, the median and upper quartile income increased over the time period by \$1,692 and \$4,236, respectively, while the lower quartile declined by \$381. The inter quartile range (IQR), that is the gap between the 75<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> percentile income, increased by \$4,600 to \$24,922 (Population Studies Centre, 2005).*

## 4. Poverty of work and employment

There are many types of work that people undertake to sustain life and to enable flourishing families, whānau, hapu and communities in any given society. There is seldom a poverty of work to be done in any society. In our conversations with people working in community services we heard of the tremendous work that is needed for the flourishing of both people and planet in their areas of concern. There are houses that need building, rebuilding and insulation. There are children, young, sick and older people that need care; parents and caregivers that need support. There are local health and social services that need rebuilding. There is transport to regionally provided services that needs co-ordination.

In capital driven societies we suggest that poverty is created by the types of work a society chooses to pay for, where it chooses to pay for it and the level of payment that work is valued at.

Work that is undertaken for a wage is usually called employment or 'having a job' in New Zealand and many other Western capitalist economies. We argue that the types of work that are recognised in our society as employment are culturally and economically defined and understood.

The capitalist system and the rise of industry outside the home and village has generally supported patriarchy and devalued the work traditionally done by women. What is deemed as work has historically constituted where distinctions were made between the public work of industry and the private work of the domestic household (Austrin, 1990). Voluntary and informal work such as the work of raising children is not called employment and was described by Marilyn Waring (1988) as "counting for nothing" in the economic statistics of this and most other western countries.

Quality of life and wellbeing in Aotearoa New Zealand depends largely on access to 'paid work.' A sense of inclusion and self worth is often greater when someone is employed. Therefore, it becomes almost natural to look to economic growth, the commoditisation of new products or services, and job creation to enable quality of life. Yet, we notice the instability and vulnerability of jobs created this way, and sense, in the conversations we have had, a growing awareness of and dissatisfaction with the focus on increasing commoditisation and need for growth that does not factor in maintaining stable and viable communities.

Most industry and thus opportunities for work have become centralised in larger cities such as Hamilton and Auckland which has meant that there is now less work available in smaller regional centres. Working age people have to leave these smaller centres to find work. The loss of this group of people has detrimentally affected the composition of these communities. We suggest that the Government has a responsibility to maintain and promote work opportunities that have meaning and support sustainable development in regional centres.

In conversations about work we hear about both the desire and need for jobs. The desire for jobs in the community is encouraged in part by the observed and known transforming effects of employment for many people.

*I recently had a young man start on the Community Max programme. He had been out walking the streets, wearing the same shoes and clothes. He is now up and running. (Coromandel)*

*There are benefits, but a job is better. When you have a job there is a sense of pride in contributing. (Coromandel)*

When poverty is understood as the degree of freedom that a person has to do and achieve things that they have reason to value (Sen, 2009) the transformation of self found in positive participation is not surprising. Sen (2009) writes that the things we value most are particularly important for us to achieve.

Participants spoke of the positive sense of inclusion in community and society that people experience when they participate in programmes that lead to jobs or being in a job rather than on a benefit. Being in employment or 'having a job' is highly valued in New Zealand society.

The valuing of employment in society is articulated in the following quote which demonstrates how a lack of employment is perceived by the majority population.

*Poverty is more about the larger population who look down on you for not getting a job. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard about the hope of job creation, and of a determined drive to find ways to make money from what was available in the local environment, through product development or tourism activities.

*I think aquaculture is big business. The industry is supposed to double. It is not clear whether this will create employment. (Coromandel)*

*I think here is more opportunity for tourism here. The kayaking tours have been successful. We could have more abseiling, walks with transport provided, or surfing tours. (Coromandel)*

We hear how small businesses are struggling to stay profitable and hence the provision of jobs through small businesses appears compromised. Even with Government subsidises, employing people may be a challenge for small businesses to afford.

*There is also a job opportunity programme through WINZ where businesses get a grant of \$9,000 toward the salary and have to meet the rest of the costs for 30hrs/week positions. It is hard for many small businesses to take these costs on. (Coromandel)*

*Small businesses are just holding on. Our group is working really hard to inform NGOs that businesses are not all money grabbing. (Thames, Hauraki)*

In the context of a financial recession people tend to spend less and employers are finding it difficult to maintain a viable business, and they are a lot less willing and able to employ people. At these times, creative responses to the creation of jobs, access to educational opportunity and the distribution of both work and income become increasingly important.

We notice that the State is no longer thought of as a primary employer and that people no longer call for employment provision from the government. We hear of dwindling government services in rural areas, and witness the community's resistance to this and anger at its occurrence.

*The loss of hospital services is one of the biggest things to spark community anger. (Tokoroa)*

In regional towns people talked about the significance of the loss of employment through reductions in government funding that supported both work programmes and educational activities. The following quotes describe not only the loss of jobs but also a loss of community support and development opportunity.

*The programme went from employing 3 insulation teams to 1 insulation team. The programme employed a lot of young Māori and Pacific men. The programme worked together with WINZ – there was a lot of interagency collaboration. The jobs were well supported. The people employed learnt how to manage money and how to feel good about themselves. (Tokoroa)*

*The funding cuts to community education, which provided a useful local base for skill and knowledge development, have had a devastating impact on the community. It was a big kick in the guts. Not only is there a loss of education opportunity but also a loss of jobs for the people running the classes. This amounts to a loss of local knowledge, capacity and skills. (Tokoroa)*



We notice how ideas of job creation, however, are not readily linked to government but to the development of commodities in the global market economy. Yet, we also hear stories of the vulnerability or work created this way, and the devastation that can result when there are shifts and failures in the market which result in local businesses being closed, sometimes after being bought out by conglomerates. Changes in the global market place in recent years have, for example, seen the value of forestry products drop and the value of dairy products rise. This has resulted in land which had previously been used for forestry being converted to dairy farms once the existing trees had been cut down. Fewer people are employed on dairy farms than were employed in forestry work.

*Forestry was huge- hundreds of people. Everyone had training. There was a career path. There used to be lots of bush trucks and now there is hardly any. The loss of forestry knocked the guts out of the community. There were marriage break-ups, domestic violence - people had no control. Counselling services in local agencies are still dealing with the impacts of this loss. (Tokoroa)*

*There is no work in the Thames Coromandel. The meat works closed, the local pig farm closed, Carter Holt Harvey closed – it could have been bought. (Thames)*

*The work in seafood is seasonal too. If there is algae bloom then there is no work. If the mussels don't spawn there is no work. The closing of Carter Holt Harvey hit hard. A lot of families had to move away....The flow on effects of the closure of work places is huge. (Coromandel)*

We hear how the search for jobs can pull communities and families apart and change the composition of communities.

*The search for jobs had a disconnecting impact on Maori whānau, as people are forced to leave to find work in the cities. (Hamilton)*

*There are no jobs to keep people in Tokoroa. There is also a young population and an aging population with a gap in the middle. (Tokoroa)*

*Times have changed. A lot of parents have left the area to get jobs. Toyota, the meat factory, Fletchers, the hospital – all this paid work has gone. Up the main street, my Mum used to know all the Māori whānau. Now it's different – the whānau come from different places and you no longer know each other. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard that jobs and paid employment are constructs of Pākehā and western culture and related to the capitalist economy. We sense a frustration with, and a questioning of, a western organisation of work.

*Everything is so structured now and you have to have money to do things. In the Pākehā world you have to get paid, you have to do this and you have to do that. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard about a desire for a new paradigm in which work is reconceptualised and informed by different ways of thinking that counter the dominant Pākehā or western constructions of work.

*It's about people knowing how to make a contribution. We need to reframe how we think. My job is what I do, but it is not who I am. Work is something I do and do well. There is unpaid and paid work. We need to change our whole paradigm. Everyone is making a contribution. If we don't change our paradigm, my great-grandkids will be having this same conversation. Some people on benefits are doing voluntary work and then they are pushed into going for a job. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*WINZ policies need to place some value on the voluntary work done by clients and this voluntary work is often all that some people can do. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard how the market excludes people with disabilities and how other employers are needed.

*The service is funded to find work for people with disabilities - but there is little or no work around, and who is going to employ someone with disabilities when there are others in line for the jobs. (Coromandel)*

We heard of the restricted availability of work particularly in small rural locations. The work that is available is often seasonal, unreliable and with questionable financial incentives given the stand down periods for benefit receipt.

*Trades-people are able to find work during the summer months but the work tends to dry up through the winter period. Despite attempts to stretch this income through the winter many are forced to rely on services such as the local foodbank to make ends meet. (Raglan)*

*Employment is seasonal. Small business cannot carry the staff through the winter... People, like university students, also come back to town for the summer work, it does not always go to locals. (Coromandel)*

*There is a 6 week peak season in the summer and lots of "latte set" weekend visitors but this does not provide enough regular work for the local people. For those living on benefits the stand-down period after engaging in such a short time span of seasonal work*

*is unaffordable. The work that is available is also unsuitable for single parents as the hours of available work are not usually during school time. (Raglan)*

Benefit abatement thresholds also limit the desirability and uptake of part-time work. Low abatement thresholds and marginal tax rates effectively act as a disincentive to employment.

*You can get a benefit at a particular level and then get a job and actually lose money. There are many barriers to taking on part-time work. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*I knew of someone on a benefit who earned \$100 but who lost \$96 of this due to secondary tax, keeping only \$4. The secondary tax for beneficiaries is not a good thing. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard of valued employment programmes. However, programme requirements combined with a lack of government service provision at a local level can cause considerable barriers to programme uptake.

*As part of the eligibility for the programme we check to see that they are going to get registered with WINZ but we often find that they haven't gone. It is difficult as it is a long trip for some (3+ hours return and most rely on rides from others). (Coromandel)*

People in regional centres showed a longing to have viable employment opportunities that would support growing and lively communities. The poverty spoken of was the loss of work opportunities that had been available through locally based industries, retail outlets and government services. Many of these industries and services have closed down or been moved away to larger cities leaving a huge gap in smaller communities that local people are struggling to fill. People want to work, and they want to work in their own communities, although many feel pressured to move in order to find work that was previously available where they lived.

## 5. Poverty of housing

Having a home to live in is one of the fundamental aspects of human wellbeing. Homes need to be warm, dry and affordable for all people. In New Zealand home ownership, at least for the settler population, according to Phillip Morrison

... remains an integral, and possibly *the* central component of New Zealand culture. Access to property, privacy and security and a wealth generating asset around which to raise a family has been a prime motivation for immigration since Europeans began settling in numbers in the early nineteenth century (2008, p.9).

The rates of home ownership in New Zealand rose through the post-war period and reached a peak of 73.7% in 1986. However, these rates have been steadily declining since that time to 66.9% in the 2006 census (Morrison, 2008). The decrease in homeownership and the inadequate provision of State housing coincide with the neoliberal market rules agenda which was set in place during the mid-1980s. With this agenda houses are treated as a commodity and their provision in communities has been impacted by a political preference for an unfettered and unregulated housing market combined with rising economic inequality. There is now a deficit of affordable housing in New Zealand which impacts most on the health and well being of people on low incomes

The market system has impacted on housing provision in New Zealand. Over the past two decades a housing asset bubble has developed in New Zealand. The housing asset bubble relates directly to the global investment market. Open capitalist economies, such as the New Zealand mainstream economy, are particularly vulnerable to the international investments. New Zealand's higher interest rates, created through increases in the official cash rate, are attractive to overseas investors. Greater overseas investment can result in a stronger New Zealand dollar. A stronger New Zealand dollar can make New Zealand's export businesses more vulnerable, so banks, instead of offering loans for export businesses, see home loans as a safer and preferable investment. As people are more able to get loans to purchase houses, this creates demand and pushes the costs of housing up. Increased housing costs are effectively translated into higher rents for the most vulnerable populations (Awatere, 2011).

We heard how housing needs are not being met and there is a lack of affordable housing throughout the region. The desperation to find affordable accommodation is illustrated by the following quote:

*Some Māori families, because of the lack of affordable rental accommodation, have gone to their land and now live in shacks, with eight children in one bedroom and a long drop as their only toilet, no running water or electricity. (Coromandel)*

We heard how the housing market does not provide adequately for the needs of the community.

*Housing is a huge problem. There are not a lot of places to rent and so the rents are high. Some rental properties are in really poor condition but people here do not have other options. They are not worth the money that you have to pay. (Coromandel)*

We heard how economic inequality makes the crises of housing nonsensical. Housing markets appear to respond to affluence rather than need. In coastal locations, where the more affluent vacation, properties are: left unoccupied; rented on short term basis, or; unaffordable as rentals for local residents.

*54% of rate payers in the Thames Coromandel are absentee landlords. If we could only balance it out a bit -if less people had two houses. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*Approximately 60% of the housing stock in Raglan is owned by absentee landlords, who may use their properties as holiday homes for short periods of the year. One out of four houses was empty at the last census. Most of the rental stock is only available on a short term basis. Renters often move frequently, as houses tend to be more affordable when they are on the market. (Raglan)*

The desirability of a location as a holiday destination for more affluent groups in society affects the availability of housing and accommodation costs for the local residents as houses become more popular and prices are driven up. The housing asset bubble combined with greater inequity in available work and incomes levels, has resulted in the housing needs of many being left unmet.

The development of coastal locations by property developers, investors, and affluent people with increased disposable income, who have the means to make money out of rising house prices have, in effect, made housing unaffordable for less affluent locals.

*There has been a good deal of property development in recent years which has pushed property prices up and rates are now higher as a result. This has meant that many low income, Maori, and older people, some who have been in Raglan for years, can no longer afford to live in their existing homes. (Raglan)*

*The decile rating of Colville school is higher because of the big baches, yet nothing has changed for that community. The school decile rating is not reflective of the incomes of people who live in the community and creates an inequality when it comes to getting funding etc. (Coromandel)*

We heard of the pressure that exists to respond to a lack of housing provision by moving to more affordable locations away from their homes.

*They could move into bigger centres where the rents may be more affordable, but the idea of this scares them as they have lived in the Coromandel their whole lives.  
(Coromandel)*

We heard how participation in the housing market can create and exacerbate financial poverty.

*When some services try to house the homeless and send them to WINZ, this sometimes sets up a cycle of debt with the bond, connection fees etc. (Hamilton)*

We heard of a lack of community capacity to respond to housing need, even at a maintenance level.

*There is often no money for ongoing maintenance of homes. We have a nanny who comes here to our house. In the house where she lives she has to walk over holes to get to both the toilet and bath. We have many substandard homes in the Coromandel.  
(Coromandel)*

We heard of the ongoing ramifications of poor housing:

*There is no way you could expect kids to function, cope and do well within the school system when they are living in these conditions. (Coromandel)*

*The lack of quality affordable housing leads to health issues such as asthma and other respiratory problems. (Coromandel)*

We consider that it is a basic right of all people in Aotearoa to have adequate shelter and that includes having a warm dry home to live in. Access to affordable and adequate housing would be a significant health prevention strategy, particularly for vulnerable children and older people. Home ownership is known to provide a buffer to poverty in old age and recent trends of decreasing home ownership present a cause for concern as the baby boomer generation ages (Waldegrave & Cameron, 2010). The current sensitivity of the New Zealand housing market to interest rates, the value of New Zealand currency and overseas investment, has resulted in a poverty of housing. We suggest that housing provision, particularly for people who are financially vulnerable, needs to be approached from a social justice rather than market driven agenda.

***Statistics that help us tell the story***

*The rent to income ratio in the Waikato Region increased from 20% in 1991 to 27% in 2001(Environment Waikato, 2010).*

## 6. Disenfranchised youth

The most disturbing aspect in all of the stories people have told about poverty, are the stories about the effects of poverty on young people. Many young people in our communities are growing up in poor housing, in broken families, with little or no local paid work, and an education system that is not meeting them where they are and encouraging their development. They are the casualties of a system that prides itself on individual achievement, often at the expense of family and community wellbeing.

We heard how the education system grapples with increasing social issues and of compromising effects of social issues on educational achievement.

*After the recent suicide I visited a number of homes and saw a girl who had been sent home due to not wearing the correct uniform. I thought 'what good is that having her sit at home?' (Coromandel)*

*The school has funded an Alternative Education Unit which seems to be used as a way of placing the kids who aren't achieving at the school and has access to the resources of the school. (Coromandel)*

*Unless the system takes on the kids who are experiencing problems they will not be able to succeed. (Coromandel)*

*I was part of the school previously but was dissatisfied with the education. I didn't feel like I was able to do what I needed to do in that system. (Coromandel)*

*The school is realizing that unless you address the home issues the kid's school experiences will be compromised. There is awareness of how the home issues are impacting and that we can do things to support the kids. (Coromandel)*

*We need education in schools that focuses on identity. We need new ways of teaching, new teachings, cause the ways it is now is not working. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*The Ministry of Education has to be accountable. They need to provide adequately for our children. They hold the budget for getting our young people ready for work. (Thames, Hauraki)*

Of concern in conversations about poverty is the numbers of young people who are currently not completing NCEA levels 1, 2 or 3 at secondary school or leave early and are unemployed once they exit this system. There is little offered by way of social support particularly if they are in the 16-18 year old age group.

We heard of a determined drive for employment amongst young people. We heard of young people eager to get out of school and find a job.

*Parents of the kids at the Alternative Education Unit come and see me. Kids are coming out of school not having achieved [NCEA] level 1. They are 16 and they want a job. As soon as they hit 16 they ask - 'can you get me a job?' They are employment focused. (Coromandel)*

However, the chance of finding work is limited particularly in small rural locations:

*When young people leave school there are very few local work opportunities for them. (Raglan)*

Employment is generally regarded as the most reliable pathway to economic security. A lack of inclusion or success in the mainstream school system perhaps creates a desire for employment ahead of further education.

We heard stories of significant service gaps in the provision of social support for young people who are no longer supported by family and the lack of service responsiveness to the needs of young people.

*Poverty is intergenerational but the kids don't want to be there anymore. We have been asking WINZ for assistance for kids to study, to get kids what they want. These kids are in real poverty. They want to go and study, they want to get a job. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard of young people abandoned both by their families and the state.

*There is poverty with young people who are younger than 18, living independently, but who can't get the independent youth allowance. A 16 year old cannot get the independent youth allowance without parental permission and often their parents are still collecting benefits on their behalf. The young person is unable to get parental permission if the parent(s) are no longer around. These young people have no money and are often stay with friends or other family. (Coromandel)*

*Two of the youth stood out to me. They were living in substandard accommodation – they were sharing a caravan with some cousins. They had no incomes and could not get the Independent Youth Allowance. There are youth at school with no income and no one looking after them. (Coromandel)*



These young people are falling through the gaps between family and State support and often end up relying on each other to meet their daily needs. They are vulnerable to crime as they are left to live unsupported and excluded from the current social system.

Transport can be a barrier to both employment and the opportunity to participate in activities for young people:

*A barrier to work for some young people is that they cannot get to the jobs.  
(Coromandel)*

*Poverty affects an ability to be engaged in sport. People can't get children to games or to fields. There is a poverty of transport. (Thames, Hauraki)*

The lack of 'paid work' and educational opportunity for young people can have devastating consequences. One participant discussed how, in this context of limited opportunity, having children and receiving the DPB may be seen as a career option. In some centres, the effects of limited opportunity are not new.

*Teenage pregnancy has been an issue in Tokoroa for at least 16 years. Some of the teenage parents 16 years ago are becoming grandparents now. (Tokoroa)*

*What other role models are there for some girls, other than women who are on the DPB? (Hamilton)*

We heard of the devastating effects of drug and alcohol abuse and drug proliferation on our young people. Drug economies are partly a consequence of a lack of opportunity and access to economic resources.

*We are seeing more and more young people with alcohol and drug issues. We will see huge drug and alcohol abuse in our next generations. I see young people with borderline intelligence, because their Mother had been abusing when she was carrying them.  
(Thames, Hauraki)*

*The sellers are ruthless. P pushers get kids hooked at 12 and then they have a client for life. (Coromandel)*

Drug economies combined with an ongoing lack of opportunity to work or participate in society provide a toxic environment for vulnerable youth.

A lack of inclusion or limited participatory opportunity perhaps leads to behaviours that typify exclusion as evidence by the following quote:

*People think that there has to be a reason for choosing to smoke. Yet, there is sometimes no reason other than the person not wanting to change. However, sometimes a person might feel that they don't fit in the mainstream. There may be a feeling of being on the outer and smoking becomes part of this. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard responses to social issues at an individual level with the development of youth participation programmes and initiatives. We heard of a desire to promote participatory opportunities to young people.

*It's about knowledge and education, schools and parents working together. Some kids don't know what to do, or what sort of life they can have. We need to open up opportunities for young people. (Thames, Hauraki)*

*We need to be dealing with the social issues. We need to set up some after school and weekend mentoring programmes for the kids. There is a lack of good role models. Poverty is partly about the lack of experience, the lack of opportunity, and the lack of positive role models. (Coromandel)*

While the way in which a particular social issue has evolved may be understood, the energy required to advocate and call for a structural response is perhaps less possible given the increasing and ongoing pressure of dealing with the immediate social crisis or issue that is presented. However, there are ideas on ways to bring about social change through conscientising and liberating education grounded on the development of identity.

*I like the idea of doing something in the schools. We have had 18 years of the same story and nothing has changed... The students at Thames High thought that Hoterini was the Māori name for Thames. They didn't know it was the name of our ancestral chief. Our young people should know this. Schools need to go to the local marae. We need to develop cultural identity. (Thames, Hauraki).*

Recent government cuts to community education funding have eroded significant areas of participatory opportunity.

*There are people getting isolated in their homes due to a lack of transport and community education. Community education provided opportunities to socialize and learn new skills. (Coromandel)*

*The funding cuts to community education, which provided a useful local base for skill and knowledge development, have had a devastating impact on the community. It was a big kick in the guts. Not only is there a loss of education opportunity but also a loss of jobs*

*for the people running the classes. This amounts to a loss of local knowledge, capacity and skills. (Tokoroa)*

We heard of how the opportunity to participate in various activities costs money. We heard how the cost can be a barrier to participation, particularly for young people. Out of school activities like attending Boy Scouts or Girl Guides, ballet and gymnastics lessons or participation in a range club sports have always been an extra cost for families and thus more accessible to those with middle and higher incomes. In the past adults facilitated these extracurricular activities on a voluntary basis but with increasing consumerism and market-based lifestyles, increased housing and basic living costs, and the reduced availability of jobs these activities have been commoditised.

*It costs \$900 dollars for one child to go to the Scouts Jamboree (Thames, Hauraki)*

*Ballet dancing costs \$60/lesson. Sports are expensive if you haven't got money. (Thames, Hauraki)*

We heard a call from social services to provide and offer, not sell, participatory opportunity.

*We need to be dealing with the social issues. We need to set up some after school and weekend mentoring programmes for the kids. There is a lack of good role models. Poverty is partly about the lack of experience, the lack of opportunity, and the lack of positive role models. (Coromandel)*

We heard of the resilience and dedication of communities to dealing with the issues of poverty that develop through a lack of participatory opportunity. Teen pregnancy is not necessarily a bad thing (Hamerton, 2000), however, as an outcome of limited opportunity it can be difficult to manage. Intensive resource is required to adequately support young mothers. State responsiveness to the issues created from limited opportunities for young people has been lacking. There is a need for educational and work opportunities that support young people and encourage their capacity to learn and grow. Communities and the State system need to work together so that there are no young people being excluded from the system and left to fend for themselves.

*Last year there were 386 young people attending our Alternative Learning Centre, this is the same number as those enrolled at our local high school (Te Kuiti Youth Forum).*

*Māori and Pacific youth unemployment was 27.4 percent and 27.2 per cent respectively at the end of 2010 (Department of Labour, 2010)*

## 7. Moving forward together with hope

*If the causes and issues related to poverty were simple then we would surely have solutions by now!!!*

In this report we have described the various aspects of poverty, deprivation and inequality that people, neighbourhoods and communities within the Waikato are experiencing in their everyday lives. People who share these experiences and the people who work with them demonstrate both resilience and a committed responsiveness to making life the best it can be often in the face of very difficult circumstances.

Along with our research participants, we are deeply troubled by the stories we have heard, and we seek to respond in a way that, while grounded in these stories of pain, is action-orientated, uplifting, and hopeful. While we heard an abundance of critique regarding what is wrong with the structuring of society and how badly some people suffer from the 'way it is,' stories of hope seem more limited. We often feel that we don't have 'the answers' and that the issues are too big, too complex and overwhelming. Yet, the possibility of human action for positive social change is limitless, rich and diverse.

Poverty Action Waikato seeks to transform the dominant economic and social order that operates to promote inequality and greed, by raising consciousness of what we are calling 'economies of hope.' Economies of hope are based on systems and values where people trade and exchange goods and services for the mutual benefit of the society and all of its members. Economies of hope promote social justice and are concerned principally with the creation of wellbeing for both people and planet. Economies of hope are communities that trade and exchange based on, and ensuring the following principles:

- 1) The enabling of self determining peoples
- 2) Prioritisation of children and young people
- 3) Greater economic equality
- 4) A responsive state that serves, and works for, all peoples
- 5) Social security for all peoples
- 6) Easy access to government health and social services
- 7) Full employment and participation where people live
- 8) Protection and wellbeing of Earth for the lives of generations to come
- 9) Outcomes of wellbeing
- 10) Regulated markets of basic human need and state provision where necessary

Our dream for the Waikato region is to be part of a movement to support local people in their communities as they develop economies of hope in conjunction with state and social services. More widespread understandings of economic arrangements that prioritise wellbeing are important to the realisation of this dream. We contend that if 'economies of hope' and the

substance of our dreams are heard and seen as present and sustaining, more of us will be able to join in activities that have the possibility of creating the kind of society that prioritises the wellbeing of all of its peoples.

We dare to dream of a society where all children are well fed, suitably clothed, live in warm, dry homes, and where they are nurtured, loved and educated in families and communities that support their growing up into healthy, respectful and contributing adults. We dare to dream of living in a region where the land, sea and rivers that sustain us are well looked after in return. We dare to dream of living in a region where all peoples are welcomed and respected for the diverse histories, cultural ways, skills and services they bring to share for the common good of all.

All communities have their dreams for how life could be. During 2011 we will facilitate conversations regarding these dreams and actions that will transform our dreams into reality. Our facilitation of community dreaming is, as Freire (1992) suggests, a necessary political act. Drawing on the themes described in this report we have developed a number of possible advocacy strategies for change that we believe promote 'economies of hope.' These are outlined in Appendix 1.

Poverty Action Waikato aims to research and to advocate for action and investment to meet both immediate social needs and to bring about necessary structural change over time. The list of possible advocacy actions is not complete, and we want to hear from you about your dreams and the strategies for change that you believe are most important to the wellbeing of your community.

Some questions for the next phase of this research are:

- 1) Building on the inspirational advocacy work and actions of Martin Luther King Jr., and Te Puea Herangi, what dreams do you have for your community?
- 2) What actions can be, or are being, taken toward realising these dreams?
- 3) If you could change just three things in your community, what would they be?
- 4) If you could change just three government policies what would they be?
- 5) If you could change just three local government policies what would they be?

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## Appendix 1: Advocacy towards 'Economies of Hope'

In this section we outline points of potential advocacy drawn from the many conversations about poverty, inequality and deprivation that we have engaged in over the last year in our research work for Poverty Action Waikato. While there is a strong emphasis on local issues it is impossible to escape the fact that many elements of poverty and inequality can more effectively be worked with by taking a national focus.

### 1. The enabling of self determining peoples

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

#### Local:

- *Local economic development by, with and for mana whenua*
- *Guaranteed tangata whenua participation in local governance*
- *Local history being taught in schools*

#### National:

- *Exploring cultural identity as core component of the school curriculum*
- *The recognition of culture and the celebrations of cultural performance as ways to strengthen identities.*
- *An examination of cultural dominance and the ensuing privileged access to resources through a social justice lens*
- *Strategies to address institutional racism*
- *Equitable access to State and community resources and services for all peoples who share this land.*
- *The noticing of the human values being upheld when economic resources are distributed.*
- *The recognition and development of collective models of land ownership.*
- *The recognition of Te Reo Maori as an official language of New Zealand.*
- *Te reo and tikanga Māori being taught in all schools*
- *Adequate funding levels so that there are sufficient resources in te reo for kura, kohanga reo, and other full immersion and bilingual learners.*
- *Increasing the number of places and scholarships available for the training of Māori teachers and teachers in te reo.*



## **2. The prioritisation of children and young people**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

### **Local:**

- *Support for parent/s to raise their children in safe homes and environments*
- *Easy access to early childhood education centres in areas where there is a need*
- *Safe and reliable publicly funded transportation so that caregivers are able to get children to early childhood education centres*
- *Drier, warmer, well-insulated homes through an expanded household energy efficiency program*
- *Easy access to parks, playgrounds and other challenging activities for all children and young people*
- *Easy access to sports participation for all children and young people including the provision of transportation*

### **National:**

- *The introduction of a Consumer Price Index-adjusted Universal Child Benefit. (For example, \$16.50 for the first child and \$11.50 for each subsequent child, as at 2007)*
- *Extended paid parental leave to a total of 13 months.*
- *The right of parents with young children to work flexible hours which meet family needs.*
- *Free healthcare and dental care for all children.*
- *The teaching of nutrition, cooking, gardening and basic wood and metal work skills in all schools.*
- *The amendment of National Educational Goals to ensure that only healthy food and drink is sold in schools.*
- *An education system that focuses on meeting the diverse and complex range of needs of children to promote their best opportunities for learning and growing.*
- *Recognition and resourcing of Māori education systems and practices and their contribution to the education of all New Zealanders.*
- *An understanding of how drug economies develop, operate and destroy the hopes and dreams of young people, families and communities.*

## **3. Greater economic equality**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

### **National:**

- *Government policies that reduce income inequality and bring people closer together*

- *The introduction of a comprehensive capital gains tax on inflation adjusted capital gains at the time the capital gains are realised.*
- *A blanket exemption for the family home from any capital gains tax.*
- *The implementation of fair, just, legal and effective tax rates. For example: that income from \$0-\$10,000 be tax free for all people. All income above that level be taxed at varying rates. For instance, 19% for incomes from \$10,001 to \$42,500, 33% for incomes from \$42,501 to \$80,00 and 39% for incomes above \$80,001.*
- *The availability of funding, resources and expertise for all Te Tiriti o Waitangi claimants to properly prepare claims for the loss of mana and land.*
- *All Te Tiriti o Waitangi claimants to achieve just recompense, including the return of land and other resources where negotiable.*

#### **4. A responsive state that serves and works for all peoples**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

##### **Local**

- *Clear communication from government ministries and departments with regards to funding decisions*
- *The strengthening of relationship between the funder and provider of services*
- *Improved relationship and communication between the policies and provision of State services and the needs being expressed by local people*
- *Responsive and engaged Ministers of Parliament*
- *Funding requirements that recognise qualitative and anecdotal evidence*

##### **National**

- *Research that is responsive and includes advocacy so to bring about the change desired by communities.*
- *Secure funding relationships that support both charitable and advocacy initiatives, including those which critique government policy and services*
- *Ongoing funding for more generalised support and activities of established community organisations alongside the funding of specific programmes (e.g. life skills delivered through ongoing relationships as well as through prescriptive and time limited programmes).*

#### **5. Social security for all peoples**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

##### **National**

- *State services to operate as servants of the people they are paid to serve.*

- *The introduction Universal Basic Income (tax free threshold) of \$10,000 (see section 3 above).*
- *An insurance or credit bank type policy embedded into benefit payments, so that incidental expenses (e.g. repair or replacement of essential appliances) can be met without the accumulation of high interest accumulating debt.*
- *Ensure the adequacy of benefits relative to increases in the cost of living.*
- *Ensure front line (e.g. Ministry of Social Development) staff can develop effective, potentially longer term, working relationships with clients*
- *Independent living allowances with continuing work, training and educational opportunities for 16-18 year olds who have little or no social support.*

## **6. Easy access to government health and social services**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

### **Local**

- *Provision of government health and social services in all Waikato towns*
- *The funding and provision of reliable, safe transportation to centralised services when local service provision is not possible.*
- *Adequate, affordable and reliable public transportation*
- *Funding for client advocacy services so that clients are supported through the variety of government service access barriers*
- *The ability for people, for example, to make a WINZ appointment at a WINZ office and/or the provision of a phone at the WINZ office to call the WINZ 0800 number.*

## **7. Full employment and participation where people live**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

### **Local**

- *Policies of no school exclusions in all state schools throughout the region*
- *Promotion of and funding for positive youth activities particularly in small rural towns, including the provision of transportation*
- *The promotion of the importance of unpaid community work for the support of children and young people*
- *Offering, rather than selling, participatory employment opportunities for young people*
- *The development of work and participation opportunities in rural Waikato*
- *A greater commitment to proactive job creation, particularly for jobs with outputs of community wellbeing*

- *The revaluing and reinstatement of 'the state' as an employer including the reinstatement of Public Service Positions to levels observed in the 1980's*
- *The adequate resourcing of alternative education centres*
- *The re-establishment of community education*
- *The resourcing of collective, local economies*
- *The development of local sustenance economies*
- *Increased intergenerational life skills education*
- *Investment in the work that 'needs to be done' for the wellbeing of the community as a way to promote both community and economic growth*
- *Discussion and education about the meanings and cultural constructs of work*
- *Investment in house maintenance, insulation and repair work.*

### **National**

- *A 'living wage' economy instead of a low-wage economy including a base minimum wage that does not fall below 66% of the average wage.*
- *Government policy that recognises the contribution of unpaid work to society and the economy, including the work of parents and caregivers.*
- *Equal opportunities and pay equity in all work places.*
- *A comprehensive review of the tax/welfare interface*
- *The increased humanisation of work including the provision of quality work opportunities*

## **8. Protection and wellbeing of Earth for the lives of generations to come**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

### **Local**

- *The development of local economies*
- *The promotion of diverse uses for land and resources*
- *Small scale organic farming and horticulture*
- *A reduction in the intensity and mechanisation of farming*
- *The reduced use of fertiliser and sprays*
- *An increased role for mana whenua as kaitiaki of their rohe.*
- *A requirement that regional councils recognise the kaitiaki role of hapu when developing regional coastal plans and aquaculture management areas.*

### **National**

- *Prohibit commercial advertisements during pre-school and school age children's television*
- *Funding so that environmental education can be delivered in all schools*

## **9. Outcomes of wellbeing**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

### **Local:**

- *Education that has a focus on wellbeing based systems of trade and exchange*
- *A widespread critique of the effects of consumerism and a consumptive based economy*

### **National:**

- *The development and introduction of measures such as the Genuine Progress Indicator into local and national economic reports. Wellbeing indicators with a strong emphasis on sustainability will be measured and reported. These indicators will take precedence over current growth in GDP measures.*

## **10. Regulated markets of basic human need and state provision where necessary**

Poverty Action Waikato will work with people in the Waikato region to advocate for:

- *Local prices (not export prices) for New Zealand made food products*
- *Housing provision as a basic human need rather than a commodity*
- *The guaranteed availability of affordable local residential housing*
- *An increase in acquisition and/or building of state housing units by at least 3000 units a year for the next 3 years.*
- *Maintaining an income related rental policy of 25% of income for Housing New Zealand Corporation tenants.*
- *Ways to manage the housing asset bubble (e.g. by decreasing interest rates).*
- *Housing models based on shared ownership*
- *Regulation of the finance industry*
- *The reduced availability of credit cards*
- *Increased regulation of the alcohol, tobacco and gambling markets.*
- *Oppose trade deregulation in public goods, services and utilities.*