



## Submission on the Social Security Amendment Bill

Hui E! is a national tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector peak body

- Hui E! Community Aotearoa weaves collective voices and drives equitable systems change so that communities, hapū and iwi can do what they do best.
- The tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector that Hui E! Works to support includes hapū, voluntary organisations, charities, faith-based groups, health and social service delivery organisations, sports groups and community-led organisations and groups.
- The focus of Hui E!'s work includes:
  - Give effect to Te Tiriti in all our work and collaborations
  - Weave a network for community infrastructure collaboration and advocacy
  - Amplify collective action on specific issues towards transformational systems-change
  - Innovate for community-powered futures through strategic engagement, research and collective visioning.

We make 3 recommendations to the Social Services and Community Committee

- Given the economic climate and deep inequities in Aotearoa New Zealand, increasing sanctions would seem to be misplaced as a policy initiative. We note both the number of

evidence-based recommendations in the Welfare Expert Advisory Group and the lack of evidence for the efficacy of sanctions as proposed in this Bill.

- This submission focuses on the impacts of the proposals on the tangata whenua, community and voluntary sector.
- Hui E! recommends the Social Services and Community Committee:
  - Reconsider this Bill in its entirety, given it is unlikely to meet its aims and will add burden to community organisations
  - Require all agencies to ensure adequate engagement and consultation with iwi and community in advance of Bills reaching Select Committee stage
  - If the Bill does proceed:
    - Ensure full resourcing for community organisations to provide this service
    - Remove 'community' from the name given it is a Government sanction.

The sanction proposed should not be confused with, or referred to as, volunteering or community-based work

- As Volunteering New Zealand point out in their submission, volunteering is an act of giving your time and skills of your own free will. For some, volunteering can be a way to learn new skills and increase employment opportunities. However, Hui E! shares the concerns of others that if job seekers are required to undertake this work experience, particularly as a sanction, this will not have positive outcomes for either job seekers or community organisations. It may also impact on public motivations to volunteer.
- The barriers that people experience when seeking paid employment are similar to those experienced by people looking for volunteer roles, including access to transport, lack of suitable opportunities, and meeting the requirements of a role.

## The Bill does not provide a workable mechanism for its implementation

- Tangata whenua, community and voluntary organisations were already found to be stretched, with staff at risk of burnout and whānau need outstripping resource, even before the latest round of deep cuts to the sector.
- The Bill requires benefit sanctions to be implemented by community organisations through 'community work experience' placements. Community organisations have not been consulted about this proposal, nor does the Bill provide resource for them to do so.
- This Bill demonstrates a lack of understanding of community organisations, volunteering and health and safety, and does not provide for a workable option. It therefore wastes the time of the Select Committee and of the submitters due to the lack of consultation, compounded by the timeframe for submissions being over the Christmas period.
- The Regulatory Impact Statement, as prepared by the Ministry of Social Development, highlights the lack of consultation and the inability therefore to understand the issues, including of implementation.
- Community organisations, when employing staff or recruiting volunteers, must abide by health and safety and child protection legislation. This often includes Ministry of Justice or Police checks, as well as induction and training.
- The legislation is drafted as if there are ready-made placements in community for Work and Income to refer people to that fit a very narrow criteria of a specific number of hours over a specific time frame. This is simply not the case.
- The role of community organisations in designing placements, accepting or rejecting job seekers for placements is entirely missing from the legislation, along with resource to enable them to provide such a service on behalf of the Government.
- Training, induction, support, oversight and reporting for such placements would all need to be factored into resource costs for such an initiative.
- We are concerned that MSD must deem the community organisation (and the placement as 'reasonably suitable' with no explanation about what this means,

nor how they are positioned to determine such suitability. This would also add additional administrative burden and complexity to the initiative.

- For those community organisations with government contracts, there is a risk of pressure or expectation to provide such a service with no additional resource to do so.

The Bill will likely have an inequitable negative impact, particularly for

Māori

- Inequities experienced by Māori as over-represented in benefit and sanction numbers, will be compounded by this legislation, impacting on whānau and tamariki Māori.
- Tangata whenua organisations and groups report lower levels of resource and higher levels of burnout. The proposal in this Bill will add to the pressure on these organisations and groups and also act as barriers to placements in tangata whenua organisations.