

CHiLD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP

Annual Report

April 2019 - March 2020



Our vision is to have an Aotearoa where all children flourish, free from poverty

He kai tahu me kikini, he kai tahu me tīhore, mā te tamaiti te iho

"Pinch off a bit, peel off a bit, the inside is for the child" (said of the potted bird)

Our mission

CPAG strives to achieve the elimination of child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand. We work to provide evidence-based research about the causes and effects of poverty on children and their families, and to inform the public, policy makers, media and politicians of the changes to policy needed to reduce child poverty.

Our activities and decisions honour Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and other cultural perspectives.

Management Committee 2019-20

Elected: Innes Asher, Jennifer Braithwaite, Helen Bull, Frank Hogan, Alan Johnson, Therese Luxton, George Makapatama, Talavao Ngata, Michael Quirke and Sakthy Wijeyesinghe.

Co-opted: Claire Dale, Mike O'Brien, Peter O'Connor, Nikki Turner and Janfrie Wakim.

Research Committee 2019-20

Innes Asher, Toni Ashton, Gerry Cotterell, Claire Dale, Alan Johnson, Mike O'Brien, Susan St John, Janfrie Wakim.

Staff

Georgie Crow - Executive Officer

Jeni Cartwright - Communications Advisor

Carmelite Müller - Administration and Communications Assistant

**All supported by regional network volunteers in:
Nelson-Tasman, Dunedin, Christchurch, Whangarei and Wellington**

Our last 12 months of activity has seen exciting developments

Contents

Co-Convenors' report	2
The year at a glance	5
Accomplishments	4
Working together to create change	6
Te Ao Māori at CPAG	6
Full list of outputs and events	7
Ngā Tangata Microfinance report	8

Co-Convenors' report

*E ngā iwi, e ngā reo, e ngā karangatanga maha o ngā hau e whā, tēnei
te mihi atu ki a koutou katoa.*

All peoples, all voices, all the alliances from the four winds, greetings to you all.

If the COVID-19 pandemic has given us just one lesson to date it must be an appreciation that the State can move mountains if it chooses to. With the threat of mass fatalities and an overrun health system the Finance Minister Grant Robertson loosened the purse strings to offer up corporate and middle class welfare programmes as perhaps never imagined by anyone alive today. These are extraordinary times in many ways.

This corporate and middle class welfare appears very much aimed at buying time until the election but bigger problems loom large post-election especially if the forthcoming recession is as severe as many are image it might be. To its credit and as we moved into lockdown the Government offered a small \$25 per week top up to benefits and ignored business lobbyists' calls for a postponement of the minimum wage increase. But we now have the beginnings of a two-tier welfare system emerging as well – one for the deserving poor and the other for – well we know the framing.

Equally amazing to the size of the COVID response has been its speed. The Welfare Expert Advisory Group's recommendations for a more just welfare system have languished for more than a year while the same welfare system bureaucrats have been able to dream up an entire wage subsidy scheme in two or three weeks.

Child Poverty Action Group estimates that the numbers of children living in income poverty may rise by 20% over the next year or so as parents lose their jobs and as their whanau fall into reliance on the inadequate support of MSD benefits. While the job losses may be inevitable, there is nothing inevitable about these children's poverty or that of the other 250,000 children or so also living in poverty. This is a policy choice which has no justification other than political expediency.

But as the founder of the credit card system businessman Dee Hock once said 'It is far too late and things are far too bad for pessimism'. There is a growing impatience amongst the younger generations and people of colour for change to an economic system and a political discourse which favours older rich white people. How this impatience is manifest in the forthcoming election is yet to be seen. However, there is little reason for hope for immediate change as the same old culprits line up in this election race more or less with the same old ideas that reach out to the economic interests of the baby boomers. Remember the Prime Minister has given her personal pledge not to tax wealth.

But this may well be the last election where such interests dominate. The Green's conflation of a wealth tax with reform of our income support system could be a sign that finally the nexus of wealth inequalities and poverty may eventually be addressed at its cause. CPAG, and no doubt most other anti-poverty groups, support such change. The disruptions caused by COVID-19 may provide the opportunities for the extensive changes which are required to address inter-generational questions like inequality, climate change and debt.

CPAG itself is going through a series of inter-generational changes which perhaps demonstrate not only the justice of our cause but the robustness of our organisation. Younger people are moving into leadership roles within CPAG both at governance and executive levels and they are bringing in changes to our governance and managerial structures.

CPAG has enjoyed a productive collaboration with ActionStation enabling CPAG research and messages to reach a much wider audience. As ever we are grateful to Auckland City Mission for hosting CPAG in their offices and for the sharing of common concerns and values which we value highly.

Considerable change in the CPAG workforce has been seen over the past year with resignation of Celia(Hayes) Thompson after several years of conscientious service and the appointment of Georgie Crow as Executive Officer who has promoted changes in the way CPAG works. Early in 2020 Jeni Cartwright resigned to train as a teacher after 3 years as CPAG's highly effective Communications Officer. Justin Latif was appointed Jeni's successor and took up the role just as Covid-19 level 4 lockdown struck. Caitlin Neuwelt-Kearns was appointed to a joint research position with CPAG and the Auckland City Mission and Janet McAllister has continued her sterling contracted research.

CPAG's research and commentary outputs during 2019/20 remained as credible, relevant and as appreciated as ever.

These include:

- Our regular analysis and commentary on Government's budget - [Improving child wellbeing? Some relief, but no transformation. 2019 Budget Analysis Summary](#)
- Analysis of alternatives to the Accommodation Supplement - [The Accommodation Supplement: The wrong tool to fix the house](#)
- Work of the equity impacts of relationship status in the welfare system - [Relationship Status and the welfare system in Aotearoa New Zealand](#)
- Support for the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's report and findings - [The experts can all agree: Whakamana Tāngata response from Child Poverty Action Group](#)
 - A relook at food insecurity - [Aotearoa, land of the long wide bare cupboard/Food insecurity in New Zealand](#)
 - Hosting a policy summit in Wellington in November 2019 on the implications of the Welfare Advisory Group's report [2019 CPAG Whakamana Tangata \(WEAG report\) responses](#)
- The critique of the National Party's income support policies National's family incomes support policy: [A new paradigm shift or more of the same? Themed issue: National's social policy legacy.](#)
 - Further work on the impacts of Working for Families programme - [Briefing on reform of the In-Work Tax Credit](#)

Financially CPAG remains sound as our audited accounts and annual financial report show. This of course is no accident and is due the continued excellent stewardship of our Treasurer Helen Bull and the unwavering support of our donors and supporters including a most generous benefactor Lloyd Morris and a significant grant from the Todd Foundation and support for our summit from the Peter McKenzie Project.

As CPAG embarks on organisational change over the next year or so we should pause to reflect on what brings us together and on our journey so far. Somewhat ironically there is no reason to celebrate because our cause – to eradicate child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand, remains as unfinished as it did more than 25 years ago when CPAG was formed. The political rhetoric may be different from 25 years ago but the policy responses to child poverty remain as flawed and as inadequate as they always have been. The poor will always be with us if as a society we are happy that this is so.

We remain hopeful that one day CPAG is wound up because its purpose has been served. In concluding with such an idea I leave you with a poem written by the great Irish poet Seamus Heaney

*History says, 'Don't hope On the side of the grave,'
But then, once in a lifetime the longed for tidal wave
Of justice can rise up and hope and history rhyme.
So hope for a great sea- change on the far side of revenge.
Believe that a further shore is reachable from here.
Believe in miracles and cures and healing wells.*

By Alan Johnson

Deputy Co-Convenor

On behalf of

Michael Quirke - Convenor

and Janfrie Wakim - Deputy Co-Convenor

The year at a glance

Research & reports	15
Submissions	6
Press Releases	48
Speaker presentations	85
Articles & Blogs	10
Events	11
Campaigns	3
Workshops	2
Partnership events	4
Number of website visits total	173,653
Number of unique visitors total	72,166
Facebook supporters	14,724
Twitter followers	3,834

Accomplishments

An important aspect of the work that is done by CPAG and our associates is the gathering and publishing of researched evidence to demonstrate the causes and impacts of child poverty. We develop and update our policy recommendations based on the most recent Government policies, so that we are promoting the best possible changes to reduce the burden of child poverty on families and our society. 2019/2020 was a productive year for this kind of work, marked by our collaborative projects, submissions, campaigns, and summit event. Some highlights include:

Campaigns

WEAG campaign

A big focus for CPAG in 2019 was working on a collaborative campaign with four other NGOs to draw more attention to the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's recommendations and report Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand.

As part of this campaign, CPAG and ActionStation jointly hosted a breakfast media briefing where our Executive Officer Georgie Crow outlined [CPAG's priorities](#) for the Government to act on. Following the event, organisers, speakers and media walked to Hon. Jacinda Ardern's electorate office to deliver a petition signed by over 5000

people calling on the government to put children and whānau wellbeing at the heart of the welfare system. The event was well-attended by journalists and supporters.

CPAG also hosted a Summit focused on WEAG's recommendations (discussed below), sent a [technical briefing](#) to the Government, and worked with The Workshop and Toby Morris to produce a [comic](#) outlining the history of the welfare system and WEAG recommendations. Throughout the year, CPAG worked with collaboration partners to generate and place many media stories. The voice of Professor Innes Asher, herself a member of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group, calling on the government to act on these recommendations was particularly powerful in the media.

Relationship rules

Throughout 2019 and 2020 CPAG continued to highlight the punitive and harmful rules around relationships in the welfare system.

In July we published a [report](#) by researchers at the Public Policy Institute at the University of Auckland, Olivia Healy and Jennifer Curtain, that summarised the outdated thinking about the nature of relationships and dependence on a partner, the application of current rules, which state that to receive a Sole Parent Support benefit, an applicant: 'must not be in a relationship in the nature of marriage'. The authors say that the constitution of the family unit and nature of relationships have changed considerably in the last 60 years. The report from CPAG and PPI reinforces the need for immediate reform of the welfare system including relationship rules, so its basis is in kindness and empathy rather than distrust.

CPAG also joined with Auckland Action Against Poverty and ActionStation to launch an [open letter](#) calling on the Government to end these rules, generated media stories, and briefed policy makers on the changes that must occur to allow people to live with dignity.

Fix Working For Families

Building on longstanding work CPAG and associates have undertaken over the past two decades, we continued to pressure the Government to reform Working for Families so all children are treated equally and have what they need to thrive. Throughout 2019 and 2020 CPAG published [briefing papers](#), press releases, [blogs](#) and media content highlighting our policy recommendations and we were pleased to see the Government make a permanent change to the In Work Tax Credit in March 2020 as part of their initial Covid-19 rescue package.

This change means that people in paid work will be allowed to keep the In Work Tax Credit for their children when they

have too few hours of paid work to qualify for it. However, as we [noted](#) at the time, if these same parents need to access a benefit or a part benefit to survive, their children will lose this important payment. We continue to urge for a policy extension to allow all low-income families to have the full Working for Families support.

CPAG is grateful to Susan St John for her tireless efforts to push for Working For Families reform and acknowledge the work of many people over the years, to draw attention to the discriminatory nature of these policies.

Research and publications

[Accommodation Supplement: The wrong tool to fix the house](#)

In May 2019, CPAG published [Accommodation Supplement: The wrong tool to fix the house report](#), examining the rise of the flagship housing policy of the Accommodation Supplement since the early 1990s.

An uncritical acceptance of the Accommodation Supplement as the primary way to help low-income families access housing amid the housing crisis has seen sky-rocketing expenditure on this supplement with little impact on housing affordability.

Our recommendations, while inspired by the specific failures of the Accommodation Supplement, are actually wide sweeping, based on the idea that primary income should cover basic needs in all but extraordinary circumstances.

The main aim is to reduce poverty by increasing income support; and to increase the number of people who are receiving the support they need by reducing complexity in the welfare system.

[Aotearoa, land of the long wide bare cupboard: Food insecurity in New Zealand publication](#)

In November 2019 CPAG launched a research series to highlight the problems children face living in food insecure households.

The series was called, “Aotearoa, land of the long wide bare cupboard”, and featured papers by Professor Elaine Rush, Dr Rebekah Graham and Dr Sarah Gerritsen (four more papers were released in the 2020/21 reporting period).

These reports include a potential framework for a national strategy to address food access and supply, stories of those facing the realities of hunger due to insufficient incomes and research conducted by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner to describe what it is like for children who

grow up in food-insecure households.

Visit our website to download the research papers: cpag.org.nz/campaigns/the-latest-aotearoa-land-of-the-long-wide

Events

[Regional Deprivation events \(April 2019\)](#)

Following research and presentations completed in the 2018/19 year, Dr Dan Exeter presented the last of his regional deprivation research in Dunedin and Christchurch in April 2019.

The New Zealand Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), produced by Dr Exeter and his team at the University of Auckland’s School of Population Health, is a set of tools for identifying and measuring concentrations of deprivation in New Zealand.

If used widely, the IMD has the potential to inform a critical understanding of what systemic levers are needed to provide a better outlook for children and whanau in the most deprived areas, and to guide more efficient and appropriate distribution of resources.

You can read more here about Associate Professor Dan Exeter’s series of discussion documents here: cpag.org.nz/news/?m=201903

[Budget 2019 \(May 2019\)](#)

Every year CPAG hosts post Budget events across the nation, providing a unique, low-cost opportunity for communities to come together and hear about what budgetary changes will mean for children and young people, especially those whose lives are affected by structural socio-economic disadvantage.

In 2019, Post-Budget events were held in Whangarei, Auckland, Wellington (with the Public Health Association of New Zealand), Nelson, Christchurch, and Dunedin.

Read our Budget 2019 analysis here: cpag.org.nz/resources/budget/2019-3/

[Whakamana Tangata: A Youth Discussion \(August 2019\)](#)

On 7 August CPAG Youth members hosted a korero at the University of Auckland to discuss the findings of, and government responses to, the Welfare Expert Advisory Group’s report Whakamana Tāngata. The theme of the korero was “What can we do, as young people, to bring Whakamana Tāngata back into focus?”

The event consisted of a panel of experts including

Latayvia Tualasea Tautai (member of WEAG) and Alan Johnson (CPAG) who unpacked the recommendations and discussed how young people can contribute to restoring dignity to our society. There was a great turnout at the event, with opportunities to catch up for a slice of pizza and network with other youth organisations.

Summit: Whakamana Tangata: Where to from here? (November 2019)

CPAG held our annual welfare Summit 'Whakamana Tāngata: Where to from here?' in Wellington on Monday 18 November, with the aim to reflect on the recent work of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group (WEAG) and discuss its implications for welfare reform.

Experts from across a range of disciplines, including CPAG's Professor Innes Asher, Susan St John, Laura O'Connell Rapira from ActionStation and Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft, among many others, came together to discuss the priority reforms that will ensure all people can live dignified lives, and all children can thrive. The event also featured a special guest performance from Newtown School's wonderful Kapa Haka group.

Moira Lawler of Lifewise provided an excellent summation: "It's our understanding that New Zealanders really want to see children and families living above the poverty line, and to have a society where children are able to thrive and have all their needs met. We all share the view that if the Government invested in the recommendations of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group then things can be different."

Podcast links and the summit proceedings are available here: cpag.org.nz/resources/summit-2019-podcast-recordings-and-summary/

Submissions

CPAG has had the opportunity to submit on a vast range of legislative changes (including new legislation), Government consultations, and United Nations reporting in 2019 and 2020. We are grateful for the energy that has been put into these submissions from our voluntary members and management, as well as our associates and partners who have contributed their time and expertise to ensure that the opportunity we have with a Government mandate to reduce child poverty is fully explored and supported. You can access all our submissions here: cpag.org.nz/resources/submissions/

Working together to create change

In addition to our collaborations with ActionStation,

Auckland Action Against Poverty and The Workshop, CPAG was also a part of the following networks and alliances in 2019/2020:

- Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand (formerly Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa)
- Te Ohu Whakawhanaunga
- Tick For Kids
- The Equality Network

Supporters

We are once again grateful to the Auckland City Mission for their generosity in sharing their office space, free of charge with CPAG. We are thankful to both Lloyd Morris and The Todd Foundation for operational funding. CPAG also received funding from the Peter McKenzie Project for campaigning work in 2019/2020. As always, we are grateful to our supporters and volunteers who are the heart and soul of our organisation. Thank you to everyone who made donations of their time and/or money in 2019/2020.

Te Ao Maori at CPAG

Whakatauki and CPAG's four pou

Child Poverty Action Group has continued to work on developing a better understanding of Te Ao Māori and incorporating Māori values into our kaupapa, with the purpose of strengthening CPAG commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and to the tamariki of Aotearoa-New Zealand.

We acknowledge with deep gratitude the guidance and support of Dr Hirini Kaa and Michael Tamihere with this mahi. CPAG as adopted this whakatauki as being expressive of our kaupapa:

"He kai tahu me kikini, he kai tahu me tihore, mā te tamaiti te iho" "Pinch off a bit, peel off a bit, the inside is for the child" (said of the potted bird)

And four pou (underlying values):

Mana: We acknowledge and uphold the mana of all children.

Manaakitanga: We believe that our society should show respect, generosity and care for all children as taonga.

Kotahitanga: We work collectively to uphold the mana of all children and to ensure they flourish.

Matauranga: We believe that child-centred knowledge is essential to upholding their mana and enabling them to thrive.

Full list of events, reports, and submissions

Report: [Deprivation in the Nelson Marlborough Region \(April 2019\)](#)

Report: [Deprivation in the Canterbury Region \(April 2019\)](#)

Report: [Deprivation in the Northland Region \(April 2019\)](#)

Event: [Measuring deprivation in New Zealand regions - presentation series by CPAG & Associate Professor Dan Exeter \(April 2019\)](#)

Submission: [On the Tomorrow's Schools review - Our Schooling Futures: Stronger Together – Whiri Nga Kura Tuatinitini \(April 2019\)](#)

Report: [The Accommodation Supplement: The wrong tool to fix the house \(May 2019\)](#)

Submission: [On the New Zealand Health and Disability System Review \(May 2019\)](#)

Report: [Improving child wellbeing? Some relief, but no transformation. 2019 Budget Analysis Summary \(May 2019\)](#)

Event: [Post Budget event series \(May-June 2019\)](#)

Report: [The Accommodation Supplement: The wrong tool to fix the house \(May 2019\)](#)

Submission: [On the Credit Contracts Legislation Amendment Bill \(June 2019\)](#)

Report: [Relationship Status and the welfare system in Aotearoa New Zealand \(July 2019\)](#)

Event: [AGM with Guest talk from Director of ActionStation Laura O'Connell Rapira \(July 2019\)](#)

Event: [Whakamana Tangata: A Youth Discussion \(August 2019\)](#)

Report: [What the Government needs to do now to lift children out of poverty \(July 2019\)](#)

Briefing paper: [The experts can all agree: Whakamana Tāngata response from Child Poverty Action Group \(Media briefing Sept 2019\)](#)

Submission: [On the Retirement Income Review 2019 \(October 2019\)](#)

Report: [2019 CPAG Whakamana Tangata \(WEAG report\) responses \(November 2019\)](#)

Event: [CPAG Summit: Whakamana Tangata: Where to from here? \(November 2019\)](#)

Report series: [Aotearoa, land of the long wide bare cupboard/Food insecurity in New Zealand \(November 2019\)](#)

Report: [National's family incomes support policy: A new paradigm shift or more of the same? Themed issue: National's social policy legacy. By Dr Susan St John and Dr Gerard Cotterell, New Zealand Sociology 34 \(2\). \(December 2019\)](#)

Submission: [On the Budget Policy Statement 2020 \(January 2020\)](#)

Media partnership: [Fairer Future: Fixing Poverty in Aotearoa - by Toby Morris in The Spinoff \(January 2020\)](#)

Submission: [To the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing \(February 2020\)](#)

Background paper: [Briefing on reform of the In-Work Tax Credit \(February 2020\)](#)

Background paper: [A quick guide to the In-Work Tax Credit \(February 2020\)](#)

Report: [Thematic report: Child Poverty in Aotearoa/New Zealand \(February 2020\)](#)



PO Box 99-890,
Newmarket, Auckland 1149
info@ntm.org.nz • www.ntm.org.nz

Ngā Tangata Microfinance

Highlights March 2018 - February 2019

Dr M.Claire Dale - Director

Ngā Tangata Microfinance Limited

Charity Registration CC45547, Company 3035163

This is the ninth year Ngā Tangata Microfinance Limited (NTM) has delivered safe, fair, no-interest loans to low income people, with the principle aim of improving social justice and financial inclusion. NTM works in partnership with financial mentors to ensure financial education can be delivered alongside the loans, supporting enduring improved financial capability and control.

Kiwibank provides the loan capital and mentoring, the J R McKenzie Trust pays most of the costs of the small team of Executive Officer, Loan Co-ordinator and Loan Officer. A team of volunteers provide governance of the organisation and membership of the Loans Committees.

NTM's loans, with the support of 35-40 Budgeting Services, are available throughout Auckland, Northland, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Manawatu, Taranaki, Levin and Dunedin. A new transitional housing support commenced with funding from MSD

In the past year NTM approved 130 loans of up to \$3,000 for asset-building, family wellbeing, or for relief from high interest debt. Since NTM began, we have provided 450 no interest, no fee loans, totalling over \$950,000 This lending has been enabled by nearly \$300,000 of capital from Kiwibank, illustrating the leveraging power of revolving capital. We know these loans have helped to keep food on the table and stress out the door for many families.

Until the Ministry of Social Development introduced a new regime in 2017 to the budgeting sector focusing on 'building financial capability' the New Zealand Federation of Family Budgeting Services (NZFFBS), and New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services were NTM's partner organisations, along with Child Poverty Action Group. The new umbrella organisation replacing NZFFBS, FinCap, has engaged strongly with NTM, working together to improve the debt and credit environment for low income consumers.

NTM is hopeful that the Minister for Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Kris Faafoi, will introduce adequate measures in the review of the CCCFA legislation to provide vitally necessary protection for those on low incomes who need to borrow.

A continuing high level of advocacy and media communications occurred in the past year, with the increased public interest in the review of the CCCFA, high cost debt as a cause of poverty and safe, fair lending as a solution. NTM wrote or was directly mentioned in over 30 communication pieces, ranging from press releases, video, radio, television, blogs, newsletters, websites, talks, submissions, media shoots and Money Week. Kiwibank sponsored a Newsroom video series on the exploitative nature of predatory lending and mobile trucks featuring NTM's Chair.

Our thanks to CPAG for support in promoting our issues and advocacy in the media.

CHiLD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP

Child Poverty Action Group Inc.
PO Box 5611
Wellesley St
Auckland 1141
New Zealand