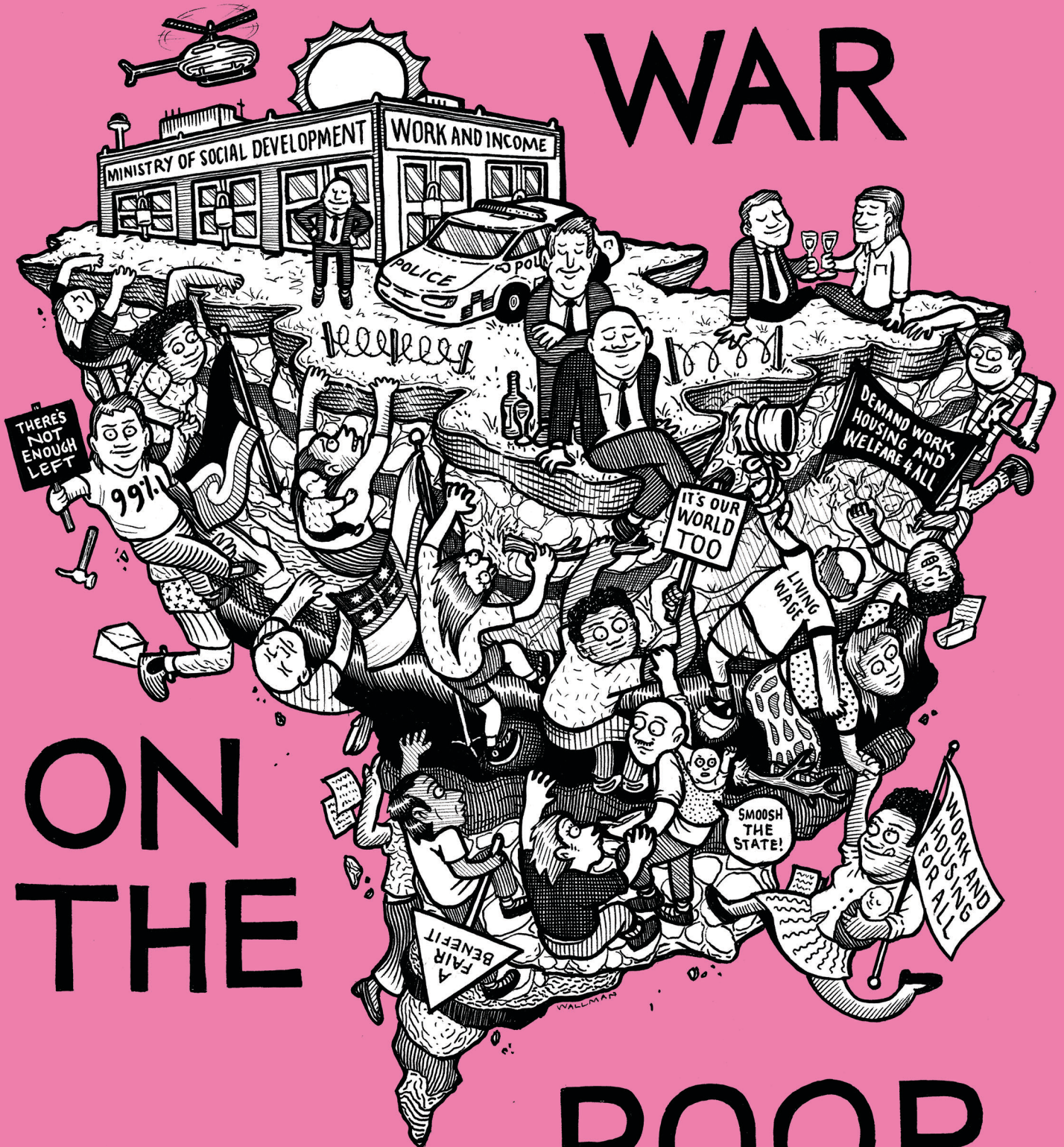


SAYS

STOP THE WAR



POOR

#NOTENOUGHLEFT

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Not Enough Left: Beneficiaries speak on their visions for welfare, work and housing

"Many people for some reason or another find themselves in situations unable to support themselves. Whether it is due to illness, injury, or unemployment. You are then exposed to a system that is riddled in discriminatory policies that punish people for aging, for being injured, for being victims of the wider systemic flaws that impact individuals on a micro level." – Māori/Samoan, sole parent, 1 child

Too often voices of beneficiaries are excluded from discussions on how society should be organised. Auckland Action Against Poverty (AAP) decided to talk with beneficiaries and the people we work with to discuss their stories, and their visions for a system based on equality and not punishment. This document is not a response to the budget, nor is it directed at those in power (though they have a lot to learn from it). Instead, this document is for those who desire a different welfare system, and want to build towards that vision.

The demands that have been produced from these stories and visions are as follows:

1. Provide liveable incomes for all to:

- A. Ensure all people can live with dignity
- B. Create security in employment and unemployment
- C. End the coercive tactics of Work & Income
- D. Value unpaid work

2. Build a culture at Work & Income based on respect and redistribution:

- E. Stop the sanctions
- F. Redefine relationships based on whānau, not finance
- G. Actively change the culture of Work & Income to assist people to access their full and legal entitlements

3. Mass build of state housing:

- H. Create maintenance rents
- I. Ensure secure tenure

4. Tax wealth

For many people and whānau, after bills and rent are paid, there is #notenoughleft to live on, let alone to live with dignity. The last 40 years has been characterised by major political, economic and technological shifts. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer. This situation was not inevitable and is not permanent, not only can it be changed but change is necessary.

It is completely achievable to have a world without poverty, where all people – employed and unemployed – have a liveable income. Where everyone in Aotearoa/ New Zealand lives in dignity. Where we have enough state housing so that all people who need a house has access to one with secure tenure. A world where work is not characterised by insecurity and low pay, but characterised by the value you contribute to society. Where being a parent, a caregiver, a community member, a creative, is valued. Where we all have a share in the wealth that we, and those that have come before us, produce. Where wealth is not held in the hands of a few wealthy elite but is for everyone to share. This world is entirely possible, we just need to fight for it.

Demand #1: Liveable incomes for all

.....
"Make [the benefit] liveable!! Make it a real safety net. Make it accessible to everyone. Make it easy to understand and use. Make it less punitive." – Anonymous
.....

.....
"Raise all benefits to living wage standards, remove medical certificate requirements for long-term sick and disabled, no more sanctions for any reason, no more benefits reduced for having a partner, no more cutting off benefits, a non-pitiful accommodation supplement, free health care and housing for beneficiaries, free public transport and study, no limit on free dental or medical allowances, no limit on food grants or disability allowances, raise amount eligible to earn before benefit cuts off." – Gender Diverse, Pākehā, Supported Living Payment
.....

.....
"I would honestly wipe clean the entire benefit system and give everyone who needs it 30 thousand per year, no questions asked ... it is 100% doable ... there have been very positive studies on this type of payment and I believe that the same programme can be implemented here with high success" – Iranian, Supported Living Payment
.....

Welfare is not simply a safety net for unforeseen hardship. The purpose of welfare is to ensure beneficiaries and their families can live in dignity, participate in society, and have an opportunity to access meaningful, dignified work where their labour is valued.

A liveable income is enough income to pay for necessities – rent, bills, food – but also enough to be able to fully participate in society, and live a decent life. This life is currently not a reality for the unemployed, students and low-waged workers.

.....
"I deserve to take my kids to the movies sometimes, to go on holiday. Why are these things considered luxury? Why am I excluded from these things because I am not rich?" – Sole Parent Support, 2 children
.....

.....
"All benefits increased ... benefits and social welfare that can help raise families and individuals out of poverty - not extra cash thrown in our pockets to help subsidise our landlord's third mortgage." – Anonymous
.....

Benefit levels are currently set at such a low amount, it is placing people and their whānau in poverty. The unemployed are not the cause of unemployment. Current welfare policy is clearly based on the lie that being unemployed is your fault. Benefit rates and the toxic Work & Income culture punishes and degrades people, forcing people into low-paid work, keeping them in a poverty trap.

"We need income that makes it possible to be above the poverty line and participate in society." – Pākehā, sole parent, 1 child

Liveable incomes will:

1. Ensure all people can live with dignity

"For the time being make them universal where possible, increase them to a level that a person can live on with dignity." – Polish, Jobseeker

The beneficiaries we have spoken to all say that benefits are simply not enough to live a dignified life and need to be increased to a liveable amount. While we must increase benefit levels as an immediate solution. We need to fight for a universal right to welfare, so that all those currently working too much, or working too little have enough income, security and time to participate in society fully. This involves fighting for a truly liveable income and moving towards a future of less work and more leisure/whānau time.

Many workers are not paid an adequate wage to live a dignified life and employment does not necessitate an escape from poverty.

2. Create security in employment and unemployment

"As a precarious and low waged worker, I have more economic security on welfare as compared to waged work ... Mostly, WINZ case workers try and push you into whatever low-waged, precarious and demeaning job which isn't sustainable so you end up returning to WINZ and entering through a revolving door. As people on benefits we deserve better than to be told the best we can expect are poverty wages and jobs that go nowhere." – Pākehā, Jobseeker

Work & Income currently use sanctions and stand-down periods to coerce people into work. The work people are being coerced into is low-paid, insecure work which does nothing to pull people and whānau out of poverty. The short-term nature, combined with the power of bosses to end people's contracts before the 90 day trial is up, means people are often forced back on the benefit. When people move from the benefit into employment with insecure hours they are often cut off from accessing entitlements from Work & Income. When they move back to the benefit due to the insecurity of employment, they often face a stand-down period. This needs to end.

"[I would like] to stop being coerced into a job I cannot do, to have enough money. To not just survive but thrive, to be treated like someone, because I am someone, we all are." – Iranian, Supported Living Payment

"A 'flexibility' that benefits the employed not just the employer." – Anonymous

"The real issue I find with employment and job hunting is when you look at job sites about 80% of jobs are advertised by temping agents. You are only guaranteed work if you are available 24/7, own transport and even then it changes weekly ... It's very frustrating living at the whim of these agencies. You can't arrange kids and daycares or sitters at the last minute and if you have these in place it ends up being expensive. I know of many people who were fired or let go before the 90 day trial was up. Good employment recognises the importance of culture and family." – Cook Island/ Māori mother of 4

3. End the coercive tactics of Work & Income

"They say you need to work but they make it as difficult as possible for you to keep a bloody job." – Supported Living Payment, 1 child

Nobody should be coerced to work. This is particularly true for those living with mental illness, sickness, disability, sole parents who are raising children and caregivers who are looking after whānau members. Paying a liveable income to both unemployed and employed workers will remove the coercive incentive to work to survive. This will limit the power of bosses to end work before the 90 day trial and encourage them to increase wages and create better conditions because people will have enough to live without being forced to take any bad job on offer.

"Stop pushing people into work or off benefits, respect and actively try get people more money and housing or whatever they are entitled to, no more punishment, no more bullying." – Pākeha, Supported Living Payment

4. Value unpaid work

Unemployment serves the purpose of keeping wages and conditions of work low. Unemployment serves the purpose of making employers richer, yet the unemployed are forced to live in poverty and precarity. Unemployed workers should be acknowledged as workers and given the respect they deserve.

Providing people with liveable incomes is an acknowledgement of the work beneficiaries do which is not acknowledged with a wage. Child care, community work, housework are all forms of work that are unpaid and undervalued, but very necessary for our system to operate. Those in power rely on this unpaid work to continue to profit. We believe producing social value is work and should be valued.

"Make volunteer work count as employment" – Pākehā, Jobseeker

"Employment should be optional, it is not within human nature to be lazy, once you provide a fair system in which people can thrive, people will create their own jobs and find something they are passionate about and do it." – Iranian woman, Supported Living Payment

Currently those who are studying end up in massive amounts of debt. Students need to be provided with free education and liveable incomes in order to be able to have the opportunity to study and further their knowledge without falling into poverty, or studying purely to be more "employable".

Demand #2: Build a culture at Work & Income based on respect and redistribution

"There needs to be a culture shift from the top down starting from the Minister. The case managers on the front line reflect the attitudes and policies of management" – Anonymous

"Welfare is a punitive, humiliating and criminalising system in which I am made to feel subhuman and unworthy of support from the state. This punitive strategy needs to change and WINZ needs to become a place and space of care, aroha and compassion." – Pākehā Jobseeker

Currently, Work & Income punish the poor and blame them for the poverty they have no part in creating. This blame is created by a system of inequality and permeates throughout our institutions – parliament, media, Ministry of Social Development – all the way down to a case manager in a Work & Income office. The toxic culture of Work & Income which punishes beneficiaries is no accident, it is built from a neoliberal ideology which frames poverty as the fault of individual behaviour to justify paying poverty benefits and forcing people into on low-paid jobs. It is created by a system which supports the wealthy and punishes the poor.

"I would like to be treated like a human, with goals and ambitions that supersede their incredibly low expectation, to be forever trapped both in NZ and the poverty hole." – Iranian women, Supported Living Payment

"We need a complete overhaul of the welfare system to get rid of the toxic culture and attitudes to those needing help." – Sole Parent Support, 1 child

We should have a welfare system which is based on respect and redistribution of wealth, where people can walk into a Work & Income office and get their entitlements without being interrogated and humiliated.

"Everyone deserves to be treated with respect. Stop wasting money on persecuting people and start spending it on helping people." – Pākehā, Supported Living Payment

In order to build this culture of respect, we must:

1. #StoptheSanctions

Sanctions are a system of punishment driven by the neoliberal ideology that welfare dependency is a "behaviour". A first step towards building a new vision for Work & Income is to stop all sanctions. This includes the punitive sanction on sole parents who do not name the other parent on the birth certificate, and work-related obligations and sanctions which force people into work no matter how bad that work is for their health and financial well-being.

The 70A sanction takes \$22-\$28 per child, per week from sole parents and their children. This financial sanctions takes money from whānau who are already poor. It impacts the ability of whānau to be able to afford to have food on the table, and pay for doctor's appointments.

"The sanctions have to stop. My twin baby's father is unnamed. I recently started working 20 hours a week and make \$30 more than I did while on a benefit. If the sanction wasn't there I would make \$70-\$80 more a week." – Māori Sole Mother, 4 children

Sole parents are also punished through work-testing. This both devalues the work of parents, and forces sole parents into further poverty. Being forced into employment means parents have to pay the extra costs of childcare and travel, alongside often not being given enough hours to cover the costs of living.

"The final straw for me has been the notification I received instructing me to find a job with longer than 20 hrs as my son turns 14 shortly – like getting a job is so damn easy." – Sole Parent Support, 1 child

2. Redefine relationships based on whānau, not finance

"Allow people to have partners without expectation that they should financially support you." – Female, Supported Living Payment

"Stop treating people in relationships as if they're co-dependant financially if one happens to lose their job. It creates an environment of dependency if it's an abusive relationship" – Anonymous

"My family have told me an investigator has made contact with them saying [me and my partner] must have been together longer than when we changed. Haven't received a letter yet but the

stress and worry of waiting has affected me. I am scared of going to jail.” – Female, Jobseeker, sole parent

The Ministry of Social Development is the third highest prosecutor after corrections and police.¹ The criminalisation of those living in poverty must end. One way beneficiaries are persecuted is through relationship fraud where Work & Income accuse a person of being in a marital-type relationship. The archaic way MSD define relationships needs to change. MSD have no idea what relationships look like. It treats people who are in a relationship as one financial unit. Their understanding of relationships are rooted in patriarchal ideas of ownership. Just because you are in a relationship, or sleeping with someone does not mean you are sharing money, or that your partner is financially supporting your children.

“Treat everyone who walks in the door with respect! Stop instilling fear in beneficiaries. Change the focus from benefit fraud to collecting unpaid tax from multinational companies. It is worth so much more money.” – Pākehā Jobseeker, 2 children

Māori understandings of whānau are not understood by Work & Income. This includes Unsupported Child Benefit payment paid to those who whāngai children. AAAP had a case where a woman was not paid for looking after her grandchildren for 10 years. She was recently back-paid \$166,000. Further to this, Work & Income only consider the family unit to be immediate family meaning they resist supporting people going to tangi for extended whānau members.

“They say he tangata, he tangata, he tangata on the walls of Work & Income but they don’t value our whakaaro. What we value as success is linked to whānau, to looking after the next generation.” – Māori/ Samoan Sole parent, 1 child

Instead of punishing and criminalising people, we need to expand the definition of relationships and family to be consistent with the reality of contemporary relationships and be consistent with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

3. Actively change the culture of Work & Income to assist people to access their full and legal entitlements

“Two of the most damaging aspects of being on WINZ is 1) the soul crushing isolation, and 2) never being sure what your own rights are.” – Pākehā Jobseeker

“Dealing with W&I is like standing trial, the only difference is at W&I you are not innocent until proven guilty. You are made to feel like scum and you now need to plead a case for the gatekeepers of entitlements to view you as a ‘legitimate’ case of hardship.” – Māori/ Samoan Sole Parent Support, 1 child

¹ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/88924330/Benefit-fraud-v-tax-avoidance-why-is-one-dealt-with-more-harshly-by-courts>

Outcomes of Work & Income should NOT be based on getting people off benefits and managing the budget of MSD. The role of Work & Income should be to help people to access their full and legal entitlement. This means actively changing the culture of denial within Work & Income.

Another limitation to accessing entitlements is the culture of intimidation and shame. Nobody should not feel ashamed to be on a benefit, yet people are interrogated and made to tell intimate details about their life to a case manager – where they spend their money, who they are sleeping with.

"I have many times experienced my dad (who was on the DPB) being spoken to as though he is stupid and won't understand things ... not being told the full extent of what we are entitled to and WINZ workers not wanting to give us things even though we are entitled to them, simply because they think we couldn't truly need it." – Samoan/ Pākehā sole parent

Many of the beneficiaries we spoke to wanted to have privacy when going into Work & Income, and to have a designated case manager so that they do not have to repeat their story to multiple people. People want to enter a space where they are respected and supported.

"Closed offices for privacy. Respect. Real help. List of all entitlements given at first meeting at the start of every meeting ... more dignity given. Better area for children who are usually expected to wait for long periods in quiet." – Supported Living Payment, 2 children

"Beneficiaries should get assigned a caseworker that they work with consistently. This will mean we won't have to keep explaining our situation over and over again. Doing this is exhausting." – Pākehā, Sole parent of 1

A way of changing this toxic culture of Work & Income, is first to change the punitive policies of MSD. Second, to ensure that the staff which are dealing with people treat them with respect. This means training staff to know what people are entitled to, and ensuring they provide people with these entitlements. AAAP provide a reputable training which Work & Income staff would benefit from.

"Regular WINZ staff meetings with advocacy groups to build a sense of empathy and education." – Samoan/ Pākehā parent of 1

Demand #3: Mass build of state housing with secure tenure

Current policies on housing, from all political parties, centre on encouraging homeownership and using private developers to increase the supply of so-called “affordable” housing. Affordable housing is not affordable to beneficiaries, unemployed and low-waged workers. While we speak of increasing the affordable housing supply, the most affordable housing stock – state housing – is under attack.

“I want housing that is affordable and always subsidised. We need to bring back state housing.” – Pākehā Jobseeker

The answer to the housing crisis is not to give more power to developers and landlords, but instead to build mass amounts of state housing. When state housing was first built it was in part built as a mechanism to prevent private market speculation as it provides a competitive and desirable alternative. When you significantly increase the state housing stock, you remove the monopoly of private landlords and therefore drive down house prices overall. If everyone had access to a state house who needed one, private landlords would not be empowered to charge monopoly rents, and place people in substandard housing.

“Stop putting people in incredible debt because a motel is the only place they can go to because of the housing crisis.” – Anonymous

Building hundreds of thousands of state houses will ensure all homeless people/ whānau, all those on the social housing waitlist and all those living in substandard private rentals paying too much rent, will have a warm, dry home to live in. The private market has failed to house beneficiaries and workers, and will continue to fail if state housing is sidelined.

“My vision for good housing is state housing. No NGO running them. Drop ‘social’ it must be state” – Pākehā, Gender Diverse, Supported Living Payment

Social housing is not the answer. Transferring state housing to a social housing market opens up housing to the principles of the private market: profit and exclusion. While there are many social housing providers involved in good projects, the only provider who can solve the housing crisis on the scale that it is, is the state.

“Allocate more Housing New Zealand housing!” – Māori, Sole Parent Support

“The government should be building as many homes as it can build!” – Pākehā Supported Living Payment

The building of warm and dry state housing, must also happen alongside:

Alongside the building of warm and dry state housing, the following must happen:

1. Create maintenance rents

.....
"Housing should not be treated in a "business manner", and should be treated more as a necessary service and essential need to people." – Cook Island/ Māori mother of 4
.....

If housing is about people and not profit, then housing should be based on producing, securing and maintaining housing. An adequate level of state housing will allow us to move towards maintenance rents. Maintenance rents is a calculation of rent based on the maintenance of the house, rather than the market price. Currently, HNZN tenants pay Income Related Rents (IRR). Tenants pay 25% of their income, and then the government pays the difference between the IRR and the market rent, then HNZN pays the government in dividends. We should not allow the market to decide how much rent we pay.

2. Ensure secure tenure

.....
"Renters should feel like they've moved into a place they can settle and make a home - not be at the whim of a landlord who can throw us out for no good reason." – Samoan/ Pākehā mother of 1
.....

Renting in both the private market and state housing, has become increasingly precarious. Renting from the private market means you are at the whim of a landlord who has the right to force you from a property through putting up the rent or selling the property. This means you have no security. In state housing, the removal of the 'homes for life' policy also means you no longer have security and could be evicted due to redevelopment, having a change in your financial situation, having a family member pass away, or being accused of anti-social behaviour.

.....
"Security of tenure in private rentals, but more importantly in state housing, particularly when people on the tenancy dies and their family are kicked out. The selling of state housing HAS to stop and a housing warrant of fitness for all rentals (private and govt owned) are desperately needed to stop issues such as poor health." – Samoan/ Pākehā sole parent
.....

People should have security in their home and in their communities. Gentrification of low-income communities through the destruction of state housing and market-driven housing is forcing people from their schools, their social services and their networks. This is leading to cities becoming inaccessible to those with low income and wages. Having state housing, instead of private market rentals will enable communities to flourish.

This unaffordability of housing is leading to homelessness, and also leading to those who contribute to our society e.g. teachers, nurses, leaving major cities such as Auckland because they simply cannot afford to live. Providing enough state housing will ensure these groups can afford to live and work in their communities.

Demand #4: Tax Wealth

"The poor get poorer, the rich get richer" – Māori sole parent

"Increasing upper income taxes, introducing capital gains tax, and getting rid of business tax loopholes." – Samoan/ Pākehā, Sole Parent Support

"One person can't own 20 houses, there needs to be a policy in place that prevents the top 1% from obtaining the majority of NZ's wealth." – Māori ex-Jobseeker

Currently low-income people are taxed too much, while those who accumulate wealth are often not taxed. The problem does not rest solely in income inequality, but in class inequality. Taxing the income of the rich is not enough. We need to tax wealth for people who own properties as a source of profit, people who invest, and people who move money on the financial market. A capital gains is also not enough, as it is not just the gains, but capital itself that needs to be taxed.

There is currently no precise measure for 'total net worth' because people do not declare it. In order to create a wealth tax, there would need to be an adequate measure of how much wealth there is. Once this is figured out, a first step in creating a more equitable society would be an annual wealth tax. Alongside this, a tax on all speculative financial transactions (buying shares, moving money etc.). To tax wealth is to make it more productive. Currently, the rich are accumulating wealth through unproductive means, largely in the financial sector.

A wealth tax will allow enough funding to build state houses and provide unemployed and employed workers with enough to live on. The accumulation of wealth by a small minority of individuals can only happen through the exploitation of workers – both employed and unemployed. It is only fair that this wealth is redistributed in order to ensure all people can live a full and decent life.

More info on why there is #notenoughLeft

Welfare

Neoliberal capitalist reforms over the last 40 years has led to a sustained attack on unemployed and employed workers. The most recent wave being National's welfare reforms focussed on reducing welfare dependency. This has transformed a welfare system built on the foundations of social security, into a system of punishment of the poor. The work-focussed principles of welfare policy force beneficiaries into work, regardless of how negative the consequences of that work to their wellbeing is. While the National government boasts about reducing benefit dependency, placing beneficiaries into a labour market characterised by precarious work has not reduced poverty.

Benefit rates for a single person on Jobseekers is \$175-\$210 a week, and for a Jobseeker with children the benefit rate is \$325-\$372 a week. While you can get top ups in the form of Temporary Additional Support (TAS) and Accommodation Supplement (AS), the benefit rate is extremely low in comparison to the costs of living. These rates are poverty rates they force beneficiaries and their whānau into poverty. It is hypocritical to denounce poverty in Aotearoa/New Zealand unless you are also willing to say that benefit rates must be significantly increased. This entrenched poverty is exemplified in the sharp increase in hardship-related payments such as food grants.² AAAP are seeing over 130 people in Manurewa and Clendon every Friday who mainly need food.³ While the need for food grants is increasing due to low benefit rates and high costs of living, the toxic culture of Work & Income consistently denies people their full entitlements, blaming the poor for the poverty created by our economic system.

In addition to the low benefit rates, beneficiaries are subject to punishment in the form of sanctions. In particular, Jobseekers and Sole Parents are sanctioned for not fulfilling their work obligations. As of June 2017, 15,619 people were being sanctioned, many of which are sole parents.⁴ The section 70A sanction of \$22-\$28 per child, per week imposed on sole mothers for not naming the father on the birth certificate impacts 13,000 mothers and 17,000 children.⁵ Beneficiaries are not only financially punished but are also criminalised. The government spends a significant amount of resources and money on investigating benefit fraud, disproportionately high in comparison to tax evasion.⁶

² <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/latest-quarterly-results/hardship-assistance.html>

³ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/91707547/staffing-shortages-force-more-than-100-to-wait-in-line-at-work-and-income-office>

⁴ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/statistics/benefit/latest-quarterly-results/benefit-sanctions.html>

⁵ "Information relating to reductions of the rates of benefits for sole parents under Section 70a of the Social Security Act" (10 May 2016) (Obtained under the Official Information Act 1982)

⁶ <http://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/88924330/Benefit-fraud-v-tax-avoidance-why-is-one-dealt-with-more-harshly-by-courts>

Work

With shifts in global capitalism, accompanied by technological advancement, the nature of work is changing drastically. While the National government discuss increased employment opportunities and a rock star economy, the nature of employment is characterised by precarity – low-wages, temporary contracts, insecure hours. There has been stagnating wages over the last 40 years despite higher levels of productivity than ever. There has been a decline in real wages, which is out of step with inflation and the cost of living. In essence, there is more wealth, but this is not being redistributed into wages or income for the working-class.

There are a lot of myths around unemployment which most political parties engage in. These includes the racist blaming of migrants, and beneficiary bashing narratives about unemployed workers being lazy and drug addicts. These narratives are used to divide the working-class. These narratives enable racism towards migrants, and discrimination against the unemployed to ultimately cause a distraction from the fact there are a lack of jobs, and an inadequate welfare system. Unemployment is created and sustained by capitalist economies to increase competition for jobs and drive wages down. It is the fault of employers, not migrants or the unemployed.

The unemployment rate moves between 4-6%. The new measure for unemployment used by Statistics New Zealand does not count those looking for jobs online in the category of unemployed. This was a decision by the National party used to skew the extent of unemployment. Further, statistics do not represent underemployment and therefore do not give a meaningful indication of the overall income workers are trying to live on.

The work-focussed nature of Work & Income means Jobseekers are forced to take jobs which are precarious under the threat of sanctions. In a recent report conducted by Superu, 23% of people who moved into employment were back on the benefit within two years, with most of those returning doing so within 12 months.⁷ Work & Income are placing people into a poverty trap between low benefit rates and short-term, low-paid, precarious work. The work-focussed policies which force beneficiaries into employment of MSD does not necessitate the wellbeing of these people and their families.⁸

The minimum wage increase to \$15.75 does little for low-income families struggling to meet housing costs and other basic needs. A living wage, which is defined as enough to cover basic necessities and to enable whānau to participate fully in society, is calculated at \$20.20. The current minimum wage does not enable families to live in dignity. Those on minimum wage are often cut off from accessing assistance from Work & Income, including not being eligible for social housing because they earn too much, yet many working families are struggling to pay for the basic necessities. The political parties focus on getting beneficiaries into work, but they lack strategy to deal with the nature of work under global capitalism.

⁷ <http://www.superu.govt.nz/publication/benefit-transitions-where-do-people-go>

⁸ <https://www.victoria.ac.nz/news/2016/08/beneficiaries-say-system-failing-to-support-them-into-quality-jobs>

Housing

Current policy on housing supports landlords, developers and investors at the expense of tenants. The housing crisis has led to tenants being forced into homelessness, substandard housing, and paying most of their benefit and wages on rent.

There are around 40,000 homeless people in Aotearoa/New Zealand.⁹ MSD are placing homeless people/ whānau in short-term emergency accommodation. While many people living in motels and cars are on the social housing waitlist, MSD force them to accept expensive private rentals with substandard conditions under the threat of recovering 25% of their income for the motel. The Government budgeted for \$2 million a year for 1400 emergency housing grant. In the last three months of 2016, the Government spent 7.7 million on 8860 grants. The government should be building state housing, not subsidising motels, selling state housing and subsidising landlords.

After years of deliberately devaluing and under-maintenance of the state housing stock, in 2013 the Social Housing Reform Programme (SHRP) began which has led to: (1) Tenants being reviewed and evicted based on earning too much or being in the wrong location/size house (2) The transfer of state housing and tenancies to Community Housing Providers (CHPs) who are largely underfunded and being used by the Government in their bid to privatise state housing. (3) Selling HNZC land to developers to build a mixture of social, affordable and private housing, leading to the state-led gentrification of previously affordable state housing communities. This, alongside tenants are being evicted from state houses because a family member dies or meth testing without any proof or conviction of drug-use, has led to a reduction in state housing.

As of June 2017, there were 5,353 people on the waiting list for a state house¹⁰, although many people who are in need of state housing are not eligible. Further to this, many people are living in mouldy and unmaintained rentals¹¹, as well as paying unaffordable rents.¹² There are 64 hectares of HNZC land which is vacant¹³, alongside 2,500 empty HNZC homes. In general, there are around 140,000 empty homes, many of which are used by parasitic landowners as speculative investments.

In the absence of an adequate state housing supply, the only other subsidy for low-income people is the Accommodation Supplement (AS) which is essentially a subsidy for landlords. In 2016, more than half of people receiving AS still pay more than half their income in housing costs.

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/els/family/HC3-1-Homeless-population.pdf>.

¹⁰ <http://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/work-programmes/social-housing/social-housing-quarterly-report-june-2017.pdf>.

¹¹ https://www.branz.co.nz/cms_show_download.php?id=a1eff0a2fd9885ecf878ce475631df7025cf3b8

¹² <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/info-services/housing-property/sector-information-and-statistics/documents-and-images-library/HAM%20v%201.0%20Results%20Paper.pdf>.

¹³ <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/96201312/multiple-protests-on-vacant-housing-new-zealand-land-call-for-more-state-housing>

How people can share and work towards this vision

Share your stories about Work & Income and your visions for welfare, housing and work on social media with the hashtag #notenoughLeft

Get involved with Auckland Action Against Poverty (AAP). We are an advocacy, education and direct action group who speak out, stand up and fight back against the punitive welfare system.

Like our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/AAAPNZ

Email us: contact@aaap.org.nz

Visit our website: www.aaap.org.nz

Get your community together and sign up for a Benefit Rights Training, so you can advocate, educate and organise in your community. Email contact@aaap.org.nz for more details.

Share this document and our video with all your friends and whānau: www.aaap.org.nz/notenoughleft

Share these demands with your local MP, political parties and political leaders leading up to the election and beyond

Let's speak out, stand up, fight back to make these demands a reality.