



## Making multiculturalism work

In the last 10 to 15 years, we have seen an increase of arrival of people from all part of the globe through immigration. New Zealand is now home to over 180 ethnicities. It is the third most diverse country in the world. The biggest challenge we face today as people of New Zealand is how to make multi-culturalism work for our society. There are benefits of a multi-cultural society but there are also settlement issues that have resulted in a proliferation of ethnically-specific NGOs working in isolation of each other to support their communities. NGOs working across ethnicities have responded, alongside these groups, to needs and demands with minimal resources.

The Auckland Regional Settlement Strategy is designed to provide a collaborative approach to grow an economically successful region. We acknowledge the work done to further this objective. However, this forum is evidence that there is more work to do that there is a need for the government to listen and work closely with those who are most affected. The government needs to enhance the work of community groups and implement strategies that ensure an integrated, coordinated and holistic approach to the successful settlement of migrants and former refugees. The time is ripe to work together to make multi-culturalism work and make our country great.

Our organisations will share the important issues of their communities and the solutions they propose. We seek your response to these in advance of the election. Collectively our organisations call on you to commit to two propositions we consider critical for the well-being of our communities. We invite your response to these solutions at our forum.

# Our communities recommend:

## A community hub

Our organisations propose the creation of a hub, or neighbourhood centre, which is a partner for the government. This hub is a community-based collaborative approach to ensure communities settle well in New Zealand. We ask you to commit to the following:

1. We acknowledge the need for co-ordinated and sustainable contact between central government agencies and communities by: minimising processes to which migrants and refugees contribute; maximising their voice on settlement issues; and developing a co-ordinated settlement policy.

We will advocate for a well-resourced non-government community-led hub to develop and deliver appropriate community-based settlement services for migrant and former refugees in Auckland.

## A Living Wage

Our organisations support a Living Wage that will enable all migrant and former refugees to earn enough money to survive and participate as active citizens in society. We ask you to commit to the following:

2. We acknowledge the need for meaningful and sustainable employment. If our communities are to participate in employment and contribute to the economy, our earnings must be sufficient to ensure that all migrant and former refugee workers can survive and participate in society.

We are calling on candidates in these elections to advocate for a Living Wage for all public sector workers and workers employed through government contracts to deliver services on a regular and on-going basis to the public and to the community.

**“I want to give my daughter my best but my pay is too low. If I had a Living Wage I might be able to save some money to send her to university to fulfil her dream of being a doctor. “**

**Fofoa Tufi**



### Participating Organisations:

AFRICAN WELFARE SERVICE TRUST □ AUCKLAND LATIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY □ AFRICAN COMMUNITIES FORUM □  
AUCKLAND REFUGEE COMMUNITY COALITION □ CHINESE ACTION NETWORK □ CRESCENDO TRUST □ JAPANESE  
COMMUNITY □ LIVING WAGE MOVEMENT AOTEAROA NZ □ MIGRANT ACTION TRUST □ MIGRANTE AOTEAROA NZ □  
PAKISTAN ASSOCIATION OF NZ □ SFWU-MIGRANT ADVISORY GROUP □ SUKHMANI CHARITABLE TRUST □  
UNION NETWORK OF MIGRANTS (UNEMIG)

Authorised by: Annabel Newman, Living Wage Aotearoa Movement NZ, 35 George St, Kingsland, Auckland

# Issue 1: Former refugee concerns

## Background

New Zealand accepts 750 refugees annually through the quota programme. In six intakes a year. Quota refugees are given permanent residence on arrival in NZ and spend their first six weeks at the Mangere Refugee Resettlement Centre. The orientation programme focuses on English language skills and information such as law and customs, shopping and cooking, to aid resettlement and they also complete physical and mental health checks. NZ Red Cross is contracted by Immigration NZ to set up services to support former refugees after they leave the centre. Each former refugee or family is also assigned a social worker and volunteer support worker/s to help them for their first 12 months in New Zealand.

## Problems faced by former refugees

1. There is a lack of community participation in local integration.

The model of resettling former refugees is not complete and does not provide durable solutions to their displacement through resettlement. Resettlement is a multi-dimensional, multi-generational and multi-player process. Refugees are not moving into government they are moving into our communities. The process requires all the players because government does not give friendship and community. Auckland Refugee Community Coalition and ethnic-based communities can fulfil this need. However, they function with volunteers are hampered by a lack of paid staff to provide an intermediary, partner, and community link. ARCC is able to identify, respond to diverse needs of refugees and is competent at delivering linguistically and culturally appropriate services. This has earned ARCC the trust and respect of the former refugees they serve.

2. Family separation.

The separation of family members affects the integrity of the family unit and has impact on individual and social consequences especially where separation involves children.

- Former refugees suffer family separation and often struggle to fully integrate, participate in, and contribute to New Zealand society.
- Requirements of the Refugee Family Support Category, and other family residence categories, requires individual to choose one family member over others which can further separate the family. Unsuccessful applicants face little likelihood of ever being reunited with family members because they do not fit the narrow criteria to qualify as a tier 1 sponsor.

## Recommendations

We are calling on candidates to:

1. Increase local integration of former refugees by resourcing community based organisations, including the ARCC and other ethnic-based organisations, which are key players in former refugee integration into the community. Partnering with community groups is the most sustainable and effective model for successful local integration.
2. Advocate for a change to family reunification policy through consultation with key players from the community and their organisations to ensure durable solutions to family reunification.

# Issue 2: Safe and ethnically appropriate housing for elderly

## Introduction

Most migrant families including Kiwis believe that the elderly bring wisdom and play an important role in our society. Elderly people are a wealth of knowledge and wisdom and should be treated with the respect that they have earned over their lifetime. If we treat them as if they are unimportant and bothersome, society will miss out on all the information and traditions that they carry within them. Not to mention, we all will be old at one point (unless death occurs early) and should think of how we would want to be regarded in our old age.

## Background

Older people are a hugely diverse group. In our market driven society, people have become so busy often leaving the elderly vulnerable and isolated. Working families have to work long hours or work in two jobs because they do not have enough money to live, leaving the elderly to look after themselves. Financial pressures caused by a lack of meaningful adequately paid employment in New Zealand drives many overseas, leaving their elderly in the care of the government.

## Problems faced by elderly

There are elderly people being abused in their present abode but unable to speak out due to culture shame. The abuse and isolation is causing stress and depression resulting in health related issues that create a burden on our health system. Elderly who have housing provided by Housing New Zealand are suffering in isolation because of language barriers and cultural differences. Further, their social interaction is limited by the high cost of housing; many will not travel because this means they may not be able to pay for the rent.

## Recommendations

The elderly need safe and ethnically appropriate housing. They need a community much like the community they left back home. We ask candidates to commit to:

- Strategically housing the elderly according to language and culture so they can access friends nearby, get mutual support and keep them engaged
- Properly resourcing an existing NGO that provides programmes to keep the elderly active, fit, healthy and self-reliant
- The creation of a community-based hub which provides integrated and holistic programmes across all cultures.

# Issue 3: International students

## Introduction

“International education is important to New Zealand’s economic prosperity, cultural and social links with the world. As well as strengthening the education system, international education is expected to contribute to New Zealand’s goal for research, innovation, trade and tourism. The partnership that international education encourages with our major trading partners in Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Pacific are crucial for economic growth, international relations, human capital development and the acquisition of highly skilled people. International education is a significant service export and a key contributor to the Government’s Business Growth Agenda. In 2012, international education contributed around \$2.5 billion to the New Zealand economy.”<sup>1</sup>

## Background

New Zealand sees international education as one of the key contributors to economic prosperity, cultural and social links with the world. It is therefore NZ’s moral obligation to look after and give international students support. International student graduates are also offered a graduate job search visa which suggests that NZ sees them as potential permanent resident; citizens who later will be part of the fabric of our society. They will live here permanently and start a family. NZ must provide them a good start in life in much the same way as we would all like for all our children.

## Problems faced by international students

Common challenges of international students while studying include: culture shock, homesickness, family worries, language barriers, study pressure and problematic home stay. These challenges can lead to anxiety, depression and suicide if unaddressed. Further, many have been victimised by education agents and immigration consultants charging exorbitant fees. Student visa holders are allowed to work part-time at 20 hours per week and some are subjected to employer exploitation such as being denied legal rights and/or being expected to work more than 20 hours per week. After graduation, international students face further challenges of not finding meaningful employment. Education institutions where they study provide no job search support, or support that is sub-standard and irrelevant.

## Recommendations

Create an agency or fund an existing NGO to provide services currently available to domestic students, including support for a quality education; advocacy; a space for non-vocational activities to wider students’ focus; admission services for private institutions for the international students; support for students while studying and working part-time; Immigration services; and links to their own community.

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Economic Growth and Infrastructure Committee paper (accessed from the web, undated)

# Issue 4: Transition from university to work

## Introduction

A double degree or even a Masters may not be enough for university students to break into a job in their chosen fields as the job market worsens, long after the recession officially ended. Transitioning from university to the work force within your field of study has become a luxury for many students. It has become an unattainable dream.

## The problem for students

The sitting government urged the population to up skill in order to find better paying jobs; and that is what the majority of the students attending New Zealand top universities have been doing. However, once they are out of university there is no employment available to them. As of the first quarter of the year 2014, the unemployment rate was still at 6%.

The common answer given to many of those students is that they either don't have the experience required or that they are not what the employers are looking for. In the mean time, those students that have higher qualifications also have a high amount of student loans for which they have no repayment solution.

For international students there is also a perception of discrimination; as now some online application requires you to put down your ethnicity.

## Recommendations

We are calling on candidates for these elections to:

1. Set up one-year transition programmes across the government sector, such as volunteer or work experience opportunities for international students.
2. Externally advertise positions for government agencies rather than hire internally so qualified immigrant applicants have a better chance of employment.
3. Introduce equal opportunities programmes in public agencies such as an application number system rather than applicant names so the employer cannot identify ethnicity.
4. Tighten rules against discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, such as the identification of ethnicity on application forms.

***“All that is valuable in human society depends upon the opportunity for development accorded to the individual.” Albert Einstein***

# Issue 5: A Living Wage

## Introduction

The Living Wage Movement promotes wellbeing in our Auckland communities. A Living Wage is one solution to the growing poverty and persistent income inequality in this country. The Government can play a leading role in reducing in-work poverty by ensuring a Living Wage for all those workers they directly employ and those they indirectly employ through contractors delivering services on a regular and ongoing basis.

## Background

The Living Wage Movement Aotearoa NZ is a network of organisations committed to reducing poverty and inequality by influencing Government and businesses to pay a Living Wage to all directly employed and contracted staff. Our organisation is made up of faith, community and union groups including organisations representing the concerns of migrants and former refugees. The Living Wage Movement is non-party political but we seek collectively to influence the decisions of politicians from all political parties. We are united in our call for a Living Wage.

## Problems faced by workers

Up to 285,000 New Zealand children live in poverty and 2 in 5 of those poor children are from families where at least 1 person is in full time work or self-employed. Politicians can make a difference to the lives of all New Zealanders and their communities.

Auckland is home to 1,507,600 people and nearly 40% of Auckland adults have incomes below \$20,000 annually and more than 204,500 workers earn below the Living Wage. Auckland has greater inequality than New Zealand on average.. 41% of Maori, 56% of Pacifica and 47% of Asian workers earn less than the living wage, compared with just over a quarter of European workers.

## Recommendation

A Living Wage is a solution to poverty for workers in this country. To thrive all Kiwis need jobs that pay a decent wage and the Government can set an example to the private sector by providing *workers and their families with the basic necessities of life. A living wage will enable workers to live with dignity and to participate as active citizens in society.*"

We are calling on candidates in these elections to:

1. Advocate for a Living Wage for all public sector workers and workers employed through government contracts to deliver services on a regular and on-going basis to the public and to the community
2. Provide a well-resourced migrant-centred community hub to support workers facing exploitation to receive information and support about unions and dispute resolution.

# Issue 6: Undocumented migrants

## Introduction

In New Zealand, the undocumented migrants are sometimes called “overstayers” or “illegal immigrants.” New Zealand has enjoyed relative immunity from illegal immigrants because of its island form and distance from source countries. Immigration New Zealand estimates 13,151 illegal immigrants arrived in New Zealand between 2000 and 2013.

## Background

There are various reasons why immigrants choose to be illegal in New Zealand. One reason is that their life here, even though illegal, is better than their home country. Some leave because of an abusive environment, extreme poverty or they feel their life is in danger and are seeking refuge in desperation.

Many undocumented migrants become “overstayers” not because they chose to but because they were victims of immigration agents who gave them wrong or misleading advice. Some undocumented migrants have ran out of funds to pay for an immigration consultant.

## Problems faced by undocumented workers

Migrants who are legally allowed to work in New Zealand, despite the laws in place and intervention programmes to prevent exploitation, are themselves experiencing exploitation and abuse. This is more so with overstayers who have no rights whatsoever.

The human rights of the undocumented migrant is more likely to be violated in terms of working conditions because they have no access of support from agencies like the union. They also have no access to health services and their children are deprived of education.

## Recommendations

We recommend undocumented migrants are legalised. This will generate additional tax revenue from both employers and employees and prevent undercutting of NZ businesses that employ documented persons by those that employ undocumented migrants.

We are calling on candidates for these elections to commit to advocate for:

- Programmes to legalise undocumented migrants, giving priority to skilled migrants who have been in NZ for seven years and over
- More information and services for undocumented migrants to explore options to legally work and live in NZ, without fear of being arrested and deported.
- Children of undocumented workers born in NZ to be citizens of NZ.

# Issue 7: Exploitation on work visas

## Introduction

An increasing number of migrant workers have been subject to labour exploitation. Such abhorrent practices affect immigration and employment rights and no effective measure of protection currently exist within the New Zealand legal framework.

## Background

Labour exploitation practices seriously affect New Zealand's reputation as an international destination and diminishes migrant workers' immigration and employment rights in the country. The high incidence and complexity of labour exploitation have motivated some reforms to the Immigration Act 2009 with the introduction of the Immigration Amendment Bill No.2. However, such advances do not offer a comprehensive approach to legal protection for those migrant workers subject to labour exploitation. For migrant workers, employment and immigration rights are intertwined so the recognition of an open work visa under a special category for immigration purposes may ensure that migrant workers affected by such an abhorrent practices will be able to effectively exercise their rights.

## Problems

- Migrant workers subject to labour exploitation are afraid to speak out about their situation because their immigration status is closely bound to their employment status.
- NZ Immigration law has not established a special category to regularise migrant workers subject to labour exploitation. It relies on the Immigration NZ's discretionary powers to grant a temporary class visa to those migrant workers who have been exploited.
- Lack of reliable and clear information oriented to migrant workers about their rights, legal representation and alternative courses of action reduce the capacity of migrant communities to prevent a breeding ground for exploitative practices.
- Migrant workers who are victims of labour exploitation and subject to poor conditions in the workplace have no real option of bringing their cases to court if they have no lawful immigration status in New Zealand.
- Migrant workers and families face emotional and financially stressful situations.
- New Zealand's reputation as international destination has been seriously undermined.

## Recommendations

- Instigate a two-year open work visa to offer effective protection to victims of labour exploitation.
- Fund communities to raise awareness and provide support to migrant workers rights to tackle unlawful workplaces practices.
- Increase penalties to \$100,000 for employers convicted of labour exploitation under the Immigration Amendment Act and make business owners personally liable in the event of insolvency/bankruptcy.

# Summary recommendations

The communities present seek your support for the following recommendations and a response by August 30:

1. Candidates will advocate for a well-resourced non-government community-led hub to develop and deliver appropriate community-based settlement services for migrant and former refugees in Auckland to:
  - Provide services that are available to domestic students
  - Keep the elderly active, fit, healthy and self-reliant
  - Provide integrated and holistic programmes for migrants and former refugees
  - Assist workers facing exploitation to receive information and support about union support and dispute resolution.
  - Provide services such as those available to domestic students, such as support for a quality education, advocacy, and a space for non-vocational activities to wider students' focus.

Candidates will commit to advocate for:

2. A Living Wage for all public sector workers and workers employed through government contracts to deliver services on a regular and on-going basis to the public and to the community
3. Durable solutions to family reunification policy through consultation with key players, including community representatives and related agencies
4. Strategic housing for the elderly according to language and culture so they can access friends nearby, get mutual support and be engaged
5. One-year transition programmes across the government sector, such as volunteer or work experience opportunities for international students
6. Equal opportunities programmes in public agencies such as an application number system rather than applicant names so the employer cannot identify ethnicity; and tighten rules against discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity, such as the identification of ethnicity on application forms
7. Programmes to legalise undocumented migrants, giving priority to skilled migrants who have been in NZ for seven years and over
8. More information and services for undocumented migrants to explore options to legally work and live in NZ, without fear of being arrested and deported.
9. A two-year open work visa to offer effective protection to victims of labour exploitation.
10. Community resources to raise awareness about migrant workers rights and support to access representation to tackle unlawful workplaces practices.
11. Increased penalties to \$100,000 for employers convicted of labour exploitation under the Immigration Amendment Act and a law that makes business owners personally liable in the event of insolvency/bankruptcy.