

Health equity in Aotearoa has been left unaddressed for far too long. The longer we ignore it, the more urgent the issues will become and the greater the resources which are lost in terms of human potential and lives. The RACP is committed to making health the norm for all, now.

Our members look beyond a three-year election cycle for the resources to make and sustain the changes urgently needed to realise the promises of Te Tiriti o Waitangi – equity, active protection, and tino rangatiratanga for all people of Aotearoa. We recognise that good health is supported by much more than infrastructure or staff: we need to look at the factors that promote healthiness, and work outside our traditional borders to advocate, collaborate and create.

The RACP's vision for health equity in Aotearoa NZ is enduring. We want to see a more fair and just society for the year when Aotearoa commemorates the bicentennial of Te Tiriti o Waitangi in 2040.

### Our vision for Aotearoa in 2040: Incomes enable whānau to live with dignity

- The Minimum Wage is a living wage
- Main benefits enable whānau to live a dignified life without being subjected to further systemic financial disadvantage

### RACP recommendations to make good work the norm

- The Living Wage is widely implemented across sectors, and Living Wage employers apply the same wage to contractors as well as employees
- Implement the recommendations of *Whakamana Tangata*, the report of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group

This is Mark. He's 47 years old, and he lives in a small town in Aotearoa NZ. Mark is a cleaner at a rest home. He is on a casual contract, and is paid \$19.20 an hour, just over the minimum wage and works 32 hours a week. Mark is always willing to take on extra shifts here and there, to supplement his income, because his low income means constant compromise.

Living on a low income means Mark chooses between turning on the heater or buying meat in his weekly supermarket shop; topping up his phone to call his kids or paying the power bill early to get the prompt payment discount. He lives in fear of the unexpected: a car trouble or an unexpected bill will set him back for weeks.



“It's all about the money aye. The money I don't have! Everything in my life revolves around the shifts I am given, and I can't ever plan anything more than two weeks in advance”

#### MARK ON HIS INCOME

Work plays many roles. While it provides the basic resources required to survive in our society, it is also essential to identity, self-esteem, and our ability to form and maintain relationships. Working conditions, including remuneration, job security, job demands, and work environments have powerful effects on physical and mental health and how we engage with services such as health. Both unemployment and precarious work are linked to poorer overall health.

### Income is important for health and wellbeing

After-tax income has direct impacts on health and wellbeing for whānau. Households on low incomes and government benefits are more likely experience barriers to access health care, to afford nutritious diets, to meet household energy costs, and to afford essential clothing, like decent shoes and a raincoat.

Many people on low wages must work multiple jobs to meet everyday expenses, but the physicality of their jobs will leave them exhausted and unable to spend time with whānau, or attend recreational and cultural events due to shift work or long hours. Whānau on low incomes or benefits can't plan or save for the future. This is subsistence living from pay cheque to pay cheque. In these circumstances, unexpected bills can't be paid, causing anxiety and stress. Lower-paid workers and people receiving a benefit must be able to live with dignity, rather than hover on the poverty line.

Unemployment is a political decision. Increasing jobs, wages, and benefit rates must be a priority.

Nina is 4 years old. She lives with her siblings, parents, grandparents, and other relatives who often stay. Nina's dad Tony works nights as a casual security guard for \$20 an hour. He regularly works over 50 hours a week, but the whānau had to turn to the food bank after their car needed major repairs, leaving no money for food.



*I need the car to get to my job and the repairs cost basically a weeks' wages.  
No way we could eat without going to the food bank. With rent and everything else, my wages don't stretch far*

**NINA'S DAD TONY**

# \$22.10

2020 LIVING WAGE

### The Living Wage supports whānau wellbeing

The Living Wage recognises that employment is much more than a transactional exchange between worker and their employer; it is a relationship across multiple people – the worker, their whānau, their employer, all surrounded by society. The Living Wage is a response to poverty, inequity and wealth disparity. It is calculated as the minimum per hour wage rate to enable a whānau to live with dignity and participate with their community.

The Living Wage promotes a holistic understanding of work, with less focus on the cash value as determined by the market, and more on the value of human and social capital gained through engaged citizens.

# \$18.90

2020 MINIMUM WAGE

Although Living Wage employers will apply the wage to their own workers, they don't always require outsourced contracts – such as for cleaning, catering and security – to meet the same standard. These workers often work several jobs to cover necessities. Living Wage policies must be extended to all workers regardless of contract.

### Raising Benefit levels supports whānau wellbeing

Many of the major reports after the 2017 Election found entrenched, systemic failings in the social welfare system. People relying on benefits in Aotearoa should not have to compromise their health or their children's health to be able to afford safe housing, nutritious diets and meet basic living expenses.

In a just or decent society, it is fundamental to enable people and whānau to live a life with dignity. In today's New Zealand, an underclass is condemned to perpetual cycles of poverty and hardship. Liveable incomes are fundamental to an equitable society.

**COVID-19 and the threat of widespread hardship has laid bare the desperately inadequate incomes beneficiary whānau are expected to live on: a fact that was already well-known to whānau, health professionals, and community and social workers.**