

Housing crisis, income insufficiency, health top concerns for CMM stakeholders

Government's Budget vote this year is happening amid ongoing, significant increases in food, rent and fuel costs, with last year's wage rises already wiped out by inflation.

Inflation is now at a 30-year high, placing yet more households at risk of falling deeper into debt.

In a recent Stuff article an Infometrics economist said that inflation will be 6.6% by the end of this year and that the Reserve Bank might not get inflation back to its 1% to 3% target range before mid-2025.

Government's 'Budget Policy Statement 2023' issued mid-December last year, attributes the forecast recession to a combination of external factors: the global economic downturn, high inflation worldwide, troubling geopolitical factors such as war and trade disputes, and ongoing supply chain issues. "It is devastating to see that continuing price rises for essential items have worn away increased rates for people receiving welfare benefits," says CMM's Executive Director Jill Hawkey.

"When prices rise, so too does the GST that we have to pay on goods and services. This is a big blow particularly for low income households because they spend a greater proportion of their funds on necessities, with items such as rent, food, and fuel taking up a large and ever-growing share of their income."

Jill's concerns are echoed in the results of the latest CMM Budget Wishlist Survey. The survey found that stakeholders viewed CMM housing services as the most important to them currently. Undertaken in the first months of 2023, invitations to participate in the survey were sent to clients, staff, donors, grant-makers, volunteers, board members, and suppliers.

"Housing was overwhelmingly the most cited concern for our stakeholders," says Jill. "Top of their minds was the affordability of rentals and the need for different types of housing, particularly public housing. Co-housing and tiny houses were mentioned by some as possible alternatives."

Trade Me property data released in late March showed record highs for rent prices across Aotearoa in February, with rental properties in Canterbury (8.3%), Nelson/Tasman (10%), and Marlborough (7%) in the top five group, with the other two regions in the North Island.

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"CMM provides services in three of the five regions that saw the biggest rent increases," says Jill. "Our teams regularly provide me with updates about the scope of the problem in the areas we have a presence, so I'm not the least bit surprised that our stakeholders would like to see more social housing and better access to affordable rental housing."

Close behind housing were poverty, income security, and access to public health services. Difficulty accessing both GP and mental health services received special mention, along with concerns about the impact of cost of living increases on the already high levels of stress and anxiety experienced by vulnerable families.

Recent data released by Stats NZ provides a glimpse of the financial pressures bearing down on households that experience income insufficiency, with food prices alone rising 12.1% between March 2022 and March 2023. Meanwhile, rents for small Christchurch properties "climbed 13% year-on-year," according to a Newshub report on 26 January 2023 and the Automobile Association warned in another Newshub article published on 4 April 2023 that petrol prices could increase significantly this year."

"High petrol prices make it that much harder for poor households to participate in a range of basic activities like getting to work and attending school," says Jill.

Stakeholders were also concerned about polarisation in the community arising from disinformation and other factors, as well as

increases in the rate of family violence and substance abuse. Unsurprisingly, the effect of climate change was another shared concern.

In response to the question "What areas would you like to see Government increase or introduce funding to in this year's Budget," benefit rates, health, and housing were top of mind.

"Our stakeholders are strongly aligned to the Mission's vision of a just and inclusive society," says Jill, "and this was very clearly expressed in the response to this question. Our stakeholders were most concerned about seeing benefit rates increase in relation to child poverty alleviation, the burden of beneficiary debt, and as a caring response to the rising cost of living."

Improved access to services for mental health, dental care, child and family care, and elder care was also on people's minds, with several respondents noting the importance of Government investing more in health workforce development.

Jill says that despite the significant challenges ahead, CMM continues to believe that change is possible and our Board and staff know that our mahi in the community is often the difference between despair and hope.

"We remain committed to prioritizing those who are most vulnerable and to working where we can add value. Knowing that our stakeholders share these objectives is empowering for all of us who work here," says Jill.

A well-earned retirement

Our wonderful WesleyCare Manager, Cath Swain is retiring in mid-May and will be replaced by Donna Coxhall. Donna's career has been spent in various health settings and she is currently the facility manager of a home in Ashburton. "Cath has steered WesleyCare through a particularly challenging few years, maintaining high standards and ensuring that residents and staff were kept safe as the Covid pandemic raged around us. We're tremendously grateful for her calm and compassionate leadership, and for always advocating so strongly for our residents," says CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey. "I hope retirement brings Cath the chance to spend more time with family and to pursue her interests more fully."



A lasting gift for our residents

Bequests make a world of difference to a not-for-profit facility such as WesleyCare.

In addition to helping to provide high quality, affordable care, the generosity of donors makes Chaplaincy services possible and covers unavoidable expenses such as nursing bureau costs when rostered nurses and healthcare workers are ill. Donations also enable us to buy specialised medical equipment not covered by Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand).

Indeed, it was the generosity of people leaving a gift in their will to the Christchurch Methodist Mission that enabled WesleyCare to be rebuilt in 2015. Today, WesleyCare is a modern facility with spacious rooms and en suites for residents, and beautiful gardens to look out on or wander in.

However, the need for donations doesn't end with a new building. Residents today come to WesleyCare with high and complex needs, and specialised equipment such as ceiling hoists, air mattresses, and special shower chairs are all necessary to support the comfort of residents and protect staff from injury. Our full-time Chaplaincy service offers support to residents and their families, particularly near the end of their lives. These items are not funded by Te



Whatu Ora and as WesleyCare charges only modest premium room charges, we rely on fundraising to meet these costs.

CMM is therefore extremely grateful when a resident leaves a gift in their will to WesleyCare, or the wider Christchurch Methodist Mission. Such a gift enables us to fund these additional items and to plan ahead.

CMM Executive Director Jill Hawkey says: "Even a very small gift can make a significant difference to the care that WesleyCare is able to provide. It can purchase a piece of equipment that we wouldn't otherwise have—something that makes everyone's day easier. A gift in your will, regardless of size, can make a substantial difference to the lives of our residents."

We take great care to respect the wishes of a donor and appreciate the high level of trust in which donors hold us. Please consider taking the time to discuss a bequest to CMM with your family, and feel free to contact our Fundraising & Communications Manager, Michael Herman michaelh@mmsi.org.nz, with any questions.

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Account no. for internet banking is 02-0800-0766258-00. Please put "DONATION" in Reference Field.
Name: _____ Phone: _____
Address: _____
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Please send me information about leaving a gift in my Will to the Christchurch Methodist Mission
Please return this form to: CMM Fundraising, FREEPOST 2143, PO Box 5416, CHRISTCHURCH 8542

You can also donate online by visiting www.mmsi.org.nz/donate

Pasifika Mamas come together for joy

A new mothers' group for Pasifika women set up by the Christchurch Methodist Mission encompasses strong, positive family values and is the only one of its kind in the city.

Pasifika Mamas caters to stay-at-home mums, new mums, and young mums of Pasifika heritage, as well as mothers with Pasifika children, meeting fortnightly on a Wednesday morning at the New Brighton Union Church.

CMM's Community Development Practice Lead Fionna Chapman says Pasifika Mamas came about from conversations with friends and family members who were pregnant or had recently given birth. The initiative focuses on the coming together of Pacific women and the commonalities shared by those women. A group of three mothers were keen to start a group, so Fionna provided the space for the mothers to get together and invite others. CMM supported the growth of the group.

Starting with four mums and two expectant mums in November 2022, Pasifika Mamas now comprises anywhere between five and 11 mothers. In addition to being a lovely place to mingle, the group provides a safe space for mamas to share their stories, experiences and tips through a Pasifika lens. The group uplifts the wellbeing of the mamas and prevents social isolation. Sessions includes education on topics such as financial capability, infant massage, story time at the Aranui library, sing-along with Loopy Tunes, and also incorporates talanoa/korero (talking) sessions.

"To describe the value of caring in Pasifika society, you wouldn't have to look too far from the Fonofale model, which is our Pasifika equivalent to Te Whare Tapa Whā, that family underpins everything, and that looking after our spiritual, physical and emotional wellbeing,

as well as service to our community, is crucial," Fionna says. Pasifika parent groups are particularly important as not all second or third generation Pasifika parents are part of Pacific church communities, or have only limited experience in a Pacific community.

For Gaseilevao Faletolu-Toaiva, one of the founding mothers, the group provides the Pacific element not present in other parenting groups. "It's good for both my son and I because of the fact it is run by Pasifika and is for Pasifika and we can discuss things that are everyday things with regards to being a mum and things that are culturally appropriate. I can relate to the other mums in the group."

As a new mum, she can draw on the experience of second and third-time mothers in the group. "Everyone brings their own aspect to the group and it meshes well. Mums have said it's nice to connect with their Pacific side and make new friends, well sisters, I guess."

She enjoys seeing her son grow alongside his peers and says the group is one of her favourite aspects of being on maternity leave. "You don't have to be fluent-speaking or up to date with cultural protocols. If you identify as Pacific, or your child does, you're welcome to come along. It's a place for mums to feel safe and comfortable and it gives them a chance to get out and shake off the cabin fever and be able to socialise."



Helping whānau wrap up warm at night

Since taking over the Blanket Bank last September, CMM has been meeting the demand for free blankets and bedding in communities across Ōtautahi.

Our Community Development team who operate the Blanket Bank see a diverse range of people requesting bedding, including single people, young families, large extended families, blended families, and the working poor. They also receive many agency referrals.

"I'm saddened when we see people who are working full time. We're seeing those parts of our community who are working full time and are still unable to afford these items with the crunch of cost of living," says Community Development Worker Elizabeth McGougan.

With the colder weather setting in, there has been a sharp increase in requests that often outnumbers the levels of blankets and bedding available. "Everything that comes in is pretty much gone by the next week," says Elizabeth.

In March we asked parishes to consider hosting a blanket drive, and many responded to this call with generous collections. Businesses have also made donations and we've created a partnership with the Tamaiti Healthy Homes initiative. "The community has come through," says Community Development Practice Lead Fiona Chapman.

The Blanket Bank is more than simply a distributor of bedding. The wrap-around support offered by CMM helps recipients achieve better health and wellbeing. "We try really hard to read between the lines on a

referral form to see if there are ways we can offer help," says Fiona. "If someone hasn't turned up to collect their bedding in the agreed time frame, for example, we will try to find out what the barrier is and see if we are able to help out by delivering the bedding. We have had clients who rely on the bus service to collect bedding, or have had to juggle parenting commitments to get to our collection point."

The team try to connect people into other services where they identify a need. "If I notice it's a big whānau and I see their need is high I'll ask them; have you spoken to Healthy Homes? Who else can we link you to? Because it's not just a blanket," says Elizabeth.

Many of the families who request blankets are living in cold, damp homes. "There are houses that simply do not have any heating in them," says Elizabeth. "Some households will open up the oven after cooking dinner, and that's their form of heating."

Please consider hosting a 'Blanket Drive' or making a financial donation to help cover operating costs at www.mmsi.org.nz/Donate, select Blanket Bank.

Blankets/bedding can be dropped off at:

- > New Brighton Union Parish, 24 Union St, New Brighton
- > CMM Office, 3 Marblewood Dve, Papanui
- > Halswell Community Hub, 381 Halswell Rd

There is also a collection bin at the Challenge Service Station in South Brighton.

Children's group programmes

ACES, our six-week programme for children whose parents are separating, has resumed. Feedback shows that children really enjoy the activities and the time of connection. Schools may request ACES by contacting Rowena Dawson at rowenad@mmsi.org.nz. Our children's life skills programme, Wise-Up, will be held in schools in Term 3 and another Hornby programme will be held in Term 4. Contact Rowena even if you're outside Hornby, as we may be able to run a Wise-Up in your area if there is sufficient demand.

Happy days out for Aratupu tamariki

Who likes a fun day out, the chance to try something new and take part in different activities and experiences? Tamariki at CMM's Aratupu Preschool & Whānau hub certainly do!

Aratupu loves the chance to take its tamariki out to meet new people, explore new locations or bring visitors with a variety of skills in to educate the children. Each year, we try to help tamariki from struggling families enjoy a range of experiences that extend their learning or that develop skills which are helpful in real life. In particular, outings and new experiences make learning for tamariki from low socio-economic backgrounds more equitable.

Tamariki and their whānau respond to trips out with great excitement at the prospect of doing something new or different. "Day trips and new experiences are not common events in the lives of Aratupu whānau, who are held back by the lack of disposable income that it takes to go on a little adventure. The added cost of stretching the petrol a little bit further, or the admission cost, or even the extra cost of providing some food for the day, prohibits whānau from enjoying these experiences," says Aratupu Manager Katie.

In other years, Aratupu tamariki have enjoyed trips to Orana Park and visits to church parishes

for playtime, among other outings, and have welcomed all sort of visitors for music, storytelling and activities. Katie hopes Aratupu will be able to incorporate more outings into the curriculum in the near future.

"Communication and social skills are what children get to extend further and they also get to participate and gain an understanding of the world around them and their place in it."

Outings are a valuable part of learning. The foundation of many abilities, such as memory, decision-making and emotions, are formed in a child's early years of life. As such, experiences in those years affect brain development in a way that later experiences do not.

By offering children who wouldn't have had the opportunity to afford a trip to somewhere, such as to Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, or even offering to pay the petrol or extra food needed for a trip into the city to the museum or the beach, Aratupu is helping to eliminate barriers and to create a more level playing field.

Days out and new experiences are a source of joy and excitement for Aratupu tamariki. If you would like to help fund these trips and experiences, please consider donating at www.mmsi.org.nz/Donate and choose Aratupu Outings.

Support for Aratupu whānau

We're happy to report that donors have continued to provide Aratupu Preschool & Whānau Hub with a good supply of nappies for tamariki during session hours. Some Aratupu parents had been unable to send their tamariki to Aratupu with a supply of nappies, such was the cost of this basic requirement of preschool attendance. Having a supply of nappies in the

centre has certainly increased participation and it is such a relief for whānau not to have to worry about nappies. If you're able to support our tamariki with this essential form of support, please drop off nappies (only hypoallergenic Rascal + Friends) directly to Aratupu, 97 Harewood Road, or donate at www.mmsi.org.nz/Donate, selecting Aratupu Nappies Project.