

## **New Zealand's 2020 Budget is good news for struggling Kiwis**

The Auckland City Mission believes the 2020 Budget is right for the COVID-19 times, with a dual focus on encouraging business growth and supporting Kiwis who are struggling to make ends meet.

Chris Farrelly, CEO and Missioner of the Auckland City Mission, says the organisation particularly welcomes the social services support package that focuses on increasing access to appropriate housing and food. He notes the \$412 million allocation will make a hugely positive difference to people on benefits or low incomes.

He adds: "It's should help relieve ongoing daily difficulties for many people. At the Mission, we see the impact everyday of those who would otherwise go without the basic necessities of life, like food and adequate housing. Life becomes very difficult, very quickly.

"With the economic impact of COVID-19, it has suddenly become very difficult for many more people who have lost their jobs or are on a significantly reduced wage and can no longer afford to adequately feed their family or pay their rent."

The 2020 Budget's social services support package will, among other positives, ensure the Mission and other organisations can continue to respond to the growing demand for food parcels. The Mission now supports over 1,200 families and people each week compared to 450 before COVID-19, and expects that level to continue for many more months to come. Mr Farrelly says knowing the government is recognizing the reality of food insecurity in NZ, is reassuring.

The substantial extension of the school lunch programme will also help relieve severe pressure on parents and caregivers who can not afford to provide three meals a day for their children. Mr Farrelly says it is good news that children heading back to school will be able to rely on at least one nourishing meal a day, even if the pantry might be empty at home.

Other key benefits in the 2020 Budget for struggling Kiwis, are the commitments to build more social housing and to insulate and heat houses of low income families. Mr Farrelly says enabling this type of positive action increases the health and well-being of many families and individuals who do not have permanent or adequate housing.

"As winter approaches, a safe warm home is vital for people's health and welfare, so the focus in this area is crucial," says Mr Farrelly.

"If people have not experienced a severe lack of food or not having a warm, comfortable house, they might not fully understand how absolutely important this social services package is for the overall well-being of New Zealand. I am delighted to see a strong focus in the budget on these areas."

Parallel to the social services support package is the funds to boost the economy in the wake of COVID-19. Mr Farrelly is pleased to see a \$50m wide-ranging package aiming to save many thousands of jobs and create hundreds of thousands more.

Whilst he has no doubt that many more people will continue to need the Mission's support than before COVID-19, he hopes that the investment in infrastructure, tourism, and many other industries, will prevent many more people from living in poverty. However there remains a challenge to address in an ongoing way, the low basic income levels which have for many years led to poverty in NZ.

**For more information or to arrange attendance or interviews please contact;**

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