

Submission to the Social Services and Community Select Committee

In the matter of the

Child Poverty Reduction Bill

Auckland Council, April 2018



Mihimihi

Ka mihi ake ai ki ngā maunga here kōrero,
ki ngā pari whakarongo tai,
ki ngā awa tuku kiri o ōna manawhenua,
ōna mana ā-iwi taketake mai, tauivi atu.
Tāmaki – makau a te rau, murau a te tini, wenerau
a te mano.
Kāhore tō rite i te ao.

*I greet the mountains, repository of all that has been
said of this place,
there I greet the cliffs that have heard the ebb and
flow of the tides of time,
and the rivers that cleansed the forebears of all who
came those born of this land
and the newcomers among us all.
Auckland – beloved of hundreds, famed among the
multitude, envy of thousands.
You are unique in the world.*

Title: Submission on the Child Poverty Reduction Bill

This submission is to the Social Services and Community Select Committee.

1. Key points

- 1.1 This submission is from Auckland Council (the council) and has been approved by the Chair of the Environment and Community Committee.
- 1.2 The council is in overall support of the Child Poverty Reduction Bill (the bill) and its intent, because:
 - the wellbeing of children lies at the heart of the bill
 - Auckland experiences significant levels of child poverty
 - the council has committed to building an inclusive city where all children and young people have opportunities to thrive
 - the purpose of the bill aligns with the Auckland Plan and the goals of *I Am Auckland*, the council's strategic action plan for children and young people
 - child poverty is a real concern to Aucklanders.
- 1.3 This submission notes that:
 - Auckland experiences significant levels of child poverty and that this poverty is more concentrated in particular spatial areas and among particular ethnicities in Auckland
 - the purpose of the bill aligns to the council's strategic outcomes set out in the Auckland Plan and *I Am Auckland*, the council's strategic action plan for children and young people
 - reducing child poverty will require sustained collective effort that involves local authorities and communities
 - a set of agreed upon measures of child poverty will assist us to measure our progress and compare our results.
- 1.4 The council recommends that:
 - the child wellbeing strategy and actions be developed in consultation with local authorities

- in particular that Auckland Council be actively involved in the development of the strategy
- the child wellbeing strategy be developed in consultation with families and whānau.

2. Over a third of New Zealand's children live in Auckland, and nearly 20 per cent live in a low-income household

- 2.1 The council supports the Child Poverty Reduction Bill because child poverty is an important issue for both Auckland and New Zealand. Significantly shifting New Zealand's child poverty levels will require specific focus and action in Auckland.
- 2.2 Auckland is a youthful city. The 2013 Census counted 507,495 children and young people under the age of 24 years living in Auckland, representing 35.9 per cent of the Auckland population.
- 2.3 Of New Zealand's children aged 0 to 14 years, 34.2 per cent lived in Auckland in 2013.¹
- 2.4 Auckland experiences significant levels of child poverty. In 2013, 19 per cent of children aged 0 to 14 in Auckland lived in households with household incomes of \$40,000 or less, well below the \$78,600 median.²
- 2.5 This proportion was particularly high among children living in the four local board areas that make up the Southern Initiative (Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Ōtara-Papatoetoe, Manurewa and Papakura) and among Māori, Pasifika and Middle Eastern, Latin American and African children.
- 2.6 Poverty levels for these groups are higher due to systemic failures. The council is committed to taking a systems-based approach to addressing child poverty.
- 2.7 Recent public engagement has shown that Aucklanders care deeply about child poverty in their city and communities.

3. Both the bill and council's strategic outcomes emphasise the wellbeing of children

- 3.1 We welcome the bill going beyond setting measures and emphasising the wellbeing of children. This is in line with Auckland Council's strategic outcomes for children and young people.
- 3.2 Timing of the bill allows for further alignment of the draft Auckland Plan 2050, which is currently open for consultation.

¹ Statistics NZ, 2013 Census.

² Reid, A and Rootham, E (2016). A profile of children and young people in Auckland. Auckland Council technical report, TR2016/022.

3.3 The purpose of the bill aligns with the outcomes of the draft Auckland Plan 2050, particularly:

- Belonging and participation: All Aucklanders will be part of and contribute to society, access opportunities, and have the chance to develop to their full potential
- Homes and places: Aucklanders live in secure, healthy, and affordable homes, and have access to a range of inclusive public places
- Opportunity and prosperity: Auckland is prosperous with many opportunities and delivers a better standard of living for everyone.

3.4 The primary measures of child poverty set out in the bill have links with measures set out in the draft Auckland Plan, particularly measures of:

- relative deprivation across Auckland
- housing costs as a percentage of household income
- Aucklanders' average wages.

3.5 *I Am Auckland* is the council's strategic action plan for children and young people. It commits the council to creating an Auckland where all young Aucklanders are happy, healthy and thriving (Goal 3) and have equal opportunities to succeed and to have a fair go (Goal 4).

3.6 Achieving these goals requires that the council works with others to address child poverty and mitigate the impact of poverty and inequality on children and young people.

3.7 This strategic alignment is reflected in the work of the Southern Initiative and the council's support of community organisations with a focus on children and youth.

3.8 The council supports the inclusion of young people who have been in care up to age 21 in the definition of child in the Children's Act 2014. *I Am Auckland* includes young people up to the age of 24, as this is a period of significant change for many young people and one in which inequality and vulnerability can become more pronounced.

3.9 Consideration could be given to further expanding the definition of child in the Children's Act 2014 to reflect this.

4. Reducing child poverty will require sustained, collective action involving local authorities and communities

4.1 The council applauds the bill's requirement that Government develop a comprehensive strategy to set actions to enhance and promote the wellbeing of children in New Zealand.

4.2 To have an impact on the levels of child poverty, these actions will have to occur at all levels of government and involve different arms and functions of government working together.

- 4.3 In particular, the council recommends that the child wellbeing strategy and actions be developed in consultation with local authorities and community organisations and take into account the contribution that we can collectively make in this area.
- 4.4 The council would like to take an active role in this development, given the significant proportion of New Zealand's children who reside in Auckland and the existing levels of poverty that they face.
- 4.5 The council supports the requirement in part 3, clause 45, section 6A that before the strategy is adopted the Minister must consult with children and iwi representatives and Māori organisations.
- 4.6 The council recommends that this requirement be extended to include the families and whānau of children, as their views and experiences are crucial to understanding the needs of children.

5. The council supports measuring child poverty

- 5.1 It is important that there is a set of commonly accepted, comprehensive and robust measures of child poverty in order to measure our progress. The council supports the measures set out in the bill and the intention to set targets against them.
- 5.2 The council particularly supports the inclusion of the cost of housing in the measures, noting that Auckland has the highest cost of housing in New Zealand. Housing affordability is a common issue that is raised in the council's public engagement.
- 5.3 Strategies for addressing child poverty must consider regional variations. Income measures of poverty may not recognise issues of overcrowding, quality of housing and cost of living. The council would like to be involved in future discussions about measures and targets.
- 5.4 The council further supports the setting of both long-term (10 year) and short-term (3 year) targets.
- 5.5 These time periods coincide with Auckland Council's 10-year Budget (Long-term Plan), which sets out funding and priorities for council activity over a 10-year period and is reviewed every three years.
- 5.6 The council's current Long-term Plan is for the period 2018-2028, while the initial period for the long-term targets in the bill are for the period from the 2019/20 financial year to the 2028/29 financial year. There is opportunity for further alignment here to ensure that there is sufficient funding to support outcomes.
- 5.7 The council notes that delivering on targets for child poverty will require additional funding for action.