

Poverty Action Waikato – Advocacy is Our Priority

The system is failing, many people are suffering, and the need to boldly advocate for social justice is increasing. This is the latest news from the local research and advocacy organisation, Poverty Action Waikato (PAW). Over the past year, Poverty Action has evolved from a small research team to a dynamic and open working group made up of a diverse range of people.

PAW's vision for flourishing communities, valuing hauora, social justice, equity, and diversity was formulated earlier this year by the working group made up of Holly Snape, Kyro Selket, Martin Thrupp, Cynthia Piper, Paul Shannon, Rose Black, Robert Moore, Polly Atatoa Carr and Anna Casey-Cox.

Being bold and courageous in pursuit of this vision, is the intent of the working group, who are also committed to engaging with Te Tiriti O Waitangi and follow tikanga. With a proven track record of advocacy in the community, PAW is continuing to challenge neoliberalism and advocate with community to decision makers and each other for structural reform.

“One of our objectives is to support participatory democracy. In our last report, we documented the impacts of the Mobile Retail Trucks on people's lives. We took this issue to Council earlier in the year. The Public Places By-law makes no mention of the predatory operation of these trucks in our residential areas and we want Council to review the by-law so that the operation of the trucks is curtailed” says Anna Casey-Cox.

PAW will be attending the February 2017 City Council meeting to follow through on this issue with the new council.

Hot on the agenda of PAW is to encourage and stimulate more discussion and awareness of issues in society and participation in elections and voting. By working alongside the community PAW is developing a play where people will tell their stories of engaging with Work and Income to give voice to some of the issues they experience. Inspired by the film, *I am Daniel Blake*, PAW seeks to highlight the structural and political underpinnings of an increasingly punitive welfare system.

“Our welfare system is woefully inadequate and harsh. The neoliberal agenda, promoted by successive governments over the last three decades, has stripped our welfare services of their humanity. Our intention with this play is to work alongside the community to raise the voices of the people who are at the bitter end of a system that no longer cares. We need a welfare system that is underpinned by the values of manaakitanga and this what we are advocating for” says Kyro Selket.

The play will be performed at community centres around Hamilton during the run up to the national election next year.

The Poverty Action working group meets on the fourth Thursday of the month, generally at Community Waikato. The meetings are open to the community and all are welcome. Meeting announcements are made via the group's facebook page.

[Facebook.com/Poverty-Action-Waikato](https://www.facebook.com/Poverty-Action-Waikato)



L to R Rose Black, Kaumatua for Poverty Action Waikato Pine Campbell, and Anna Casey-Cox