

What Contributes to Long Term Benefit Receipt



Presentation to Welfare Conference
Kereama Akuhata & Joe Harawira SWAP
- Whakatane

Content

- Origins of SWAP
- Experience of the members within the welfare system
- What has contributed to their long term benefit receipt
- The consequences of being in the system
- Breaking the “we can work but don’t want to” attitude – changing the system

Sawmill Workers Exposed to Toxins

- Between the 1950's and 1980's, Pentachlorophenol – PCP was used in New Zealand's timber industry as an anti-sapstain and a wood preservative. Research shows that former timber workers may have health problems that are related to PCP and its dioxin contaminants. The timber industry stopped using PCP in 1988.

Sawmill Workers Against Poisons

- SWAP advocate for approx 200 men who were exposed to PCP at the Whakatane Sawmill site.
- Massey University Research Report released that provided academic comment and research.
- The report shows that the levels of toxin exposure as being some of the highest measurements of exposure compared to Vietnam Vets, timber workers outside of the Bay of Plenty and the Paritutu community.
- The majority of our members are in receipt of sickness or invalids benefits

What Contributes to Long Term Benefit Receipt

- Non diagnosed conditions that are REAL and determine the state of the physical and mental health of the individual
- Declining health status prohibits “normal” working hours / days
- Symptoms of multi chemical exposure
- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Chronic Pain Syndrome
- Mood Swings
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Profuse Sweating
- Weight loss / weight gain
- Alcohol abuse

Experience on Sickness & Invalids Benefit

- Subjected to hoop jumping – ACC, WINZ
- Non information giving – frontline entitlements
- Continuous re-assessment process for declining health
- Lack of or mis-diagnosis of illness leading to incorrect benefit
- Disconnection between medication to improve sickness and improving wellbeing. Recognise the cause in order to treat the symptom

Consequences of being in the welfare system

- Became cynical
- Leads to ongoing depression
- Financial pressures having to pay medical expenses
- Frustration and anger at judgements made by professionals and community
- Deflated self esteem and mana of the individual

Where to From Here

- A welfare system based upon values of rangatiratanga, whanaungatanga, mohiotanga
- More appropriate and timely medical diagnosis
- Alternative wholistic medical solutions / culturally based maori rongoa, tohunga in conjunction with western models
- A system that does not breakdown the spirit or wairua of a person to the degree that they behave like a cog in the machinery of welfare dependency
- We want to reverse the cycle of dependency for our future generations
- We want to have our whanau experience a more respectful, effective and appropriate welfare system

Sites near Whakatane Town



NgatiAwa GIS Database: Whakatane Board Mill, River and Town

