

## ***Summary of the ninth Welfare Working Group meeting, 14 October 2010***

### ***The Day***

- Welfare Working Group business
- Feedback from submissions
- Options to reduce long-term benefit dependency

### **Welfare Working Group business**

The Welfare Working Group (WWG) agreed the minutes from their eighth meeting (30 September 2010). Members did not have any new interests to note.

### **Feedback from submissions**

The WWG discussed some of the key themes that came out of the submissions received on the Issues Paper that they released in early August. Of the 16 questions the WWG sought feedback on, the questions about barriers to employment and whether there should be a stronger focus on work for beneficiaries with a sickness or disability received the largest response. The WWG emphasised the importance, when developing and considering options, of reflecting the contributions people have made in submissions and workshops.

### **Options to reduce long-term benefit dependency**

The WWG discussed options around three aspects of the benefit system with potential to reduce long-term benefit dependency:

- personal responsibility and conditionality;
- services and support; and
- the structure of benefit payments.

These discussions involved considering the evidence behind the effectiveness of various approaches, drawn from New Zealand and overseas.

Three key themes emerged in the discussion about conditionality: the importance of clear and effective communication of the conditions around benefit receipt; the importance of a credible sanctions regime that is appropriately managed; and drug and alcohol use as a barrier to sustained employment. Key points raised in the discussion about services and support included: investing in programmes that get outcomes to the right people and ensuring that effective support is available to those with complex and entrenched needs, such as former prisoners.

These themes will be further discussed at the next meeting in the context of the Options Paper.