

Summary of the thirteenth Welfare Working Group meeting, 9 December 2010

The day

- Welfare Working Group business
- Public discussion of welfare issues
- Discussion of options

Welfare Working Group business

The Welfare Working Group (WWG) agreed the minutes from their twelfth meeting (26 November 2010). No new interests were noted.

Public discussion of welfare issues

The WWG noted that the Alternative Welfare Working group was releasing its report, which would contribute to the public discussion on welfare issues. There was discussion about the media coverage of the welfare debate.

The WWG also noted that submissions were open on the Options Paper, and that there had been some submissions, mainly through the online process. It is expected that the number of submissions will grow over the coming weeks until the closing date of 24 December. Submissions will be taken into consideration as options are discussed and finalised for the WWG's final report.

The WWG noted that it had undertaken a number of engagement meetings in recent weeks, and had a small number remaining. Again, the themes and issues identified at those meetings, and the response to options presented in the Options Paper will inform consideration at the next stage.

Discussion of options

Most of the meeting was devoted to discussing options for reducing long-term dependency. The WWG looked at the issues and options in relation to Maori, where there is significant over representation among long-term beneficiaries. There was in depth consideration of engaging Maori further through a Strategic Memorandum of Understanding, as proposed in the Options Paper. The WWG also discussed the role of targets.

The WWG also reviewed the issue of financial incentives within the benefit system that arises from various policy settings. They reviewed the issues faced by people with part-time earnings, and those faced by people when their employment situation changed (eg the loss of either a full-time job, or the loss of a part-time job, and how that impacts on benefit receipt and decisions about employment participation). The WWG also further worked through the issues of benefit design which are presented in the Options Paper.