

8. CLOSING THE GAPS

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Corporate Plan Output: Policy Advice	

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with information on the central government Closing the Gaps initiative as requested at the last committee meeting.

CLOSING THE GAPS POLICY

The main drive behind the Closing the Gaps initiatives is the Cabinet Committee on Closing the Gaps. The Cabinet Committee was established to consider policies and oversee the development and implementation of measures to close the economic and social gaps between Maori and Pacific Island people and other New Zealanders.

Membership:

- Rt Hon Helen Clark (Chair)
- Hon Jim Anderton
- Hon Dr Michael Cullen
- Hon Steve Maharey
- Hon Annette King
- Hon Sandra Lee
- Hon Trevor Mallard
- Hon Margaret Wilson
- Hon Matt Robson
- Hon George Hawkins
- Hon Mark Gosche
- Hon Laila Harré
- Hon Tariana Turia
- Hon Parekura Horomia

The Closing the Gaps policy provides the Government with “an impetus to focus its attention on its own departments, strategies and systems, to produce positive results for Maori”. The Government’s priority sectors for Closing the Gaps are health, housing, education, employment, justice, welfare and business and enterprise development.

The Closing the Gaps package in Budget 2000 provided more than \$240 million for new Maori and Pacific programmes and initiatives to close gaps over the next four years. Further sums were committed in other budget packages to other Closing the Gaps initiatives which will also assist Maori, Pacific and other disadvantaged New Zealanders to achieve their potential.

BACKGROUND

Government has identified that New Zealand's future prosperity will be built on the success of the Closing the Gaps2:

“Over the last decade we have all witnessed a growing divide between the haves and the have nots in our society. This is seen most starkly in the gaps that have emerged between the experiences and outcomes of Maori and Pacific people and their fellow New Zealanders. Left unchecked, social disparity has grown and become entrenched.”
(Maharey 22/6/2000)

Economic and social disadvantage amongst Maori and Pacific peoples is well documented (see the Christchurch City Council Metropolitan Profile and Social Well-being Policy Report). However, Closing the Gaps is not only about building a more equal society, it also recognised the significant demographic change predicted to occur in the country's population. At the time of the 1996 census 24% of children were Maori and a further 10% came from Pacific communities. By 2016 it is predicted that the number of Maori children will have grown to 28% and that of Pacific children to 13%.

The Government has identified that the country's future prosperity will depend on our ability to ensure Maori and Pacific children grow into the highly skilled individuals a dynamic modern economy and society needs: “Quite simply, all New Zealanders have an interest in seeing the gaps closed. No country can prosper when almost half of its children – New Zealand's future – do not enjoy the opportunities they should.”
(Maharey, 2000)

The policy priorities of the Closing the Gaps have been driven by two reports: Closing the Gaps 1998 Report and Closing the Gaps 2000 Report.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE CLOSING THE GAPS 1998 REPORT

In 1998 Te Puni Kokiri released a report entitled “Progress Towards Closing the Social and Economic Gaps Between Maori and non-Maori”.

The 1998 Report acted as a benchmark against which the Government will measure progress towards achieving the strategic objective for Maori development. The report used key statistical indicators to assess changes in the education, employment, economic and health status of Maori. It was based on data collected by state sector agencies, either through their administrative data collections or through regular surveys. The Closing the Gaps report pulled together historical data across each of the key sectors and provided an assessment of progress made over time. Until then, it had been difficult to assess the overall social and economic position of Maori, or to gauge whether or not improvements had occurred across the relevant sectors.

The findings presented in the report were not new. There was no denying that Maori had experienced and continue to experience poorer educational outcomes, higher unemployment, lower income levels, lower rates of home ownership, and poorer health than non-Maori. However, up until the Closing the Gaps report, it was difficult, if not impossible, to assess whether disparities were improving or getting worse.

A striking feature of Maori education status over the decade prior to the report was the increased participation of Maori at all levels of the education system. By comparison, the labour force status of Maori deteriorated as a result of the economic restructuring of the 1980s, which also resulted in severe job losses for Maori.

In terms of economic status, levels of Maori self-employment and household incomes increased over the 1990s. However, housing became less affordable and Maori were still more reliant on social welfare assistance than non-Maori.

Although the 1990s saw continued improvements in Maori life expectancy and declines in the infant mortality rate, Maori health for almost every other indicator (e.g. cancer incidence, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and pneumonia) presented in the Closing the Gaps 1998 report deteriorated.

Overall, the report findings indicated that the gaps between Maori and non-Maori education, employment, economic and health status were significant, and were either stabilised or widening.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE CLOSING THE GAPS REPORT, 2000

All of the indicators in the report showed that there is considerable disparity between Maori and non-Maori.

The report demonstrated that Maori continue to experience:

- poorer health status lower income levels
- higher unemployment
- higher rates of prosecution and conviction
- attain fewer educational qualifications
- lower rates of living in owned homes than non-Maori.

Overall, there had been few reductions in disparity since the 1998 Closing the Gaps report, and in those areas where Maori rates have been improving, corresponding improvements in the status of non-Maori mean that disparities between Maori and non-Maori are not closing.

Poorer outcomes for Maori were evident from the start of life:

- Maori infants are more likely to die than non-Maori infants
- Maori children are less likely than non-Maori to be participating in early childhood education, an area that is important for future educational development (looking at the early childhood participation rate for 3-4 year olds, the Maori rate in 1998 was 65%, significantly lower than the 98% for non-Maori)

Disparities continue to exist throughout childhood and young adulthood:

- Maori are leaving secondary school with much lower levels of qualifications than non-Maori (the secondary school retention rate for Maori in 1999 was 68%, as against 88% for non-Maori)
- Majority of young Maori are leaving school with qualification levels that will disadvantage them when attempting to gain access to quality post-school education and employment (22% of Maori school leavers in 1997 went directly on to formal tertiary education while 45% of non-Maori did so, and Maori were less likely to go to university: 8% Maori, 24.8% of non-Maori).
- Maori youth are less likely to move directly into tertiary education than non-Maori, and are far less likely to be participating in formal tertiary education
- Maori are over-represented in second chance schemes, such as the Training Opportunities Programme (TOPs)

There are significant disparities between Maori and non-Maori social and economic status throughout adulthood:

- Maori unemployment and long-term unemployment rates continue to be significantly higher than for non-Maori (12% of Maori were receiving an unemployment benefit at June 1999, as against 3% for non-Maori)
- Maori are also less likely to be participating in the labour force: the New Zealand Household Labour Force Survey from Statistics New Zealand showed a 63.2% employment rate for non-Maori in December 1999, as against 51.3% for Maori (in 1986, the rates were 64.5% for non-Maori and 55.7% for Maori)
- Maori incomes are lower than those for non-Maori: only 11% of Maori reported income of \$680 or over a week, as against 21% for non-Maori
- Maori are more likely to require government assistance or to be totally dependent on a benefit
- This impacts on Maori access to adequate housing, Maori health status, and contributes to the much higher offending and victimisation rates within the Maori community

CLOSING THE GAPS BUDGET 2000 PROVISIONS

These were initially reported in the Committee report on the Central Government Budget allocations.

Maori Education

- Almost \$20 million for Maori language education, including \$6.5 million on new teaching and learning material and \$4.1 million specifically to help curriculum development at Wharekura level
- \$12.9 million to improve Maori teacher supply both in mainstream and kura kaupapa schools
- \$11.2 million on ways to help young Maori participate more fully in the school system, including a mentoring programme

- \$10.4 million for Maori responsiveness initiatives, including expanding the number of iwi education schooling improvement projects and piloting new approaches for professional development for teachers working with Maori students

Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs

- \$563,000 per annum to contract Pacific community workers throughout the country;
- \$630,000 per annum to boost its own capacity to monitor all government policies that impact on Pacific peoples
- \$100,000 per annum in capital funding

Maori and Pacific Social Services and Employment

- \$16.89 million in 2000/01 and in excess of \$72 million over four years in new funding for programmes that will have a direct impact for Maori and Pacific people. These programmes are:
 - Maori Economic and Organisational Development: \$5.37 million in 2000/01 (\$20.80 million over four years) to improve the capacity and capability of Maori organisations, assist with Maori land development and develop local partnerships that will create local employment opportunities.
 - Maori Women's Development: \$3.62 million in 2000/01 (\$14.1 million over four years) to assist Maori women to enter into, remain in or expand their businesses. The fund will also promote the development of Maori women leaders in their community and provide enterprise and leadership training.
 - Pacific People's Organisational Development: \$1.89 million in 2000/01 (\$7.1 million over four years) to provide assistance with administrative skills, leadership training, IT and infrastructure development for Pacific community organisations.
 - Investing in Maori Communities: \$1 million in 2000/01 (\$3 million over three years) to assist whanau, hapu, iwi and Maori communities to identify their needs and support their development.
 - Pacific People's Provider Development Fund: \$500,000 in 2000/01 (\$3.11 million over four years) to develop social services that are more responsive to the needs of Pacific families.
 - Iwi/Maori Provider and Workforce Development (including Iwi Social Services): 3.51 million in 2000/01 (\$14.05 million over four years) to further develop the capability of Iwi social service providers, so increasing the numbers of Maori children and young people cared for by their iwi, hapu or whanau.
 - Maori Youth Contestable Fund: \$1 million in 2000/01 (\$10 million over four years) to fund initiatives developed by Maori communities which aim to reduce Maori youth offending.

Recommendation: That the information be received.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.