

# **LivingStandardsNZ**

2013 Youth Living Standards  
Framework for New Zealand

# introduction

**We are 28 young diverse New Zealanders from throughout the country. We are keen to embrace our past and engage in issues facing New Zealand's long-term future. Throughout the three day *LivingStandardsNZ* Workshop (3–5 December 2013), in conjunction with the Guinness Institute and the Treasury, we actively collaborated to discuss what steps need to be taken today to ensure that public policy is aligned with the way we want to live.**

On day one of the workshop we attended the Government Economics Network (GEN) Conference. On the following page are the individual statements written after the conference by each of the 28 participants; the word cloud below represents the most used key words (excluding New Zealand and living standards), which are ordered by size to illustrate their frequency of use. The statements were the outcome of Exercise 1, which asked the participants to first state their age in the year 2058 and then to complete the following sentence in their own words: 'Living standards will be higher in the year 2058 if they deliver New Zealanders ...'



## Nasra Abdi

Everyone in New Zealand should be equal and work together to make the country better. Living standards should cover everyone and have everything they need to live better lives. Planning policy that will make everyone safe and set goals for the country.

## Ben Abraham

- security from environmental threats
- peace of mind that the environment is preserved for future generations
- confidence to follow their dreams
- egalitarian income distribution
- sound macroeconomic framework
- safety net for those needing welfare
- education that is personalised and available to all
- diversity of job opportunities
- freedom from debt clouds
- connection to culture & identities
- affordable & healthy housing

## Tipene Apatu

The fundamental parts of a democracy. That is, to provide individuals with the opportunity to meet their needs without encroaching on their lives. Therefore, higher living standards will be reflected through the identity of New Zealanders, further strengthening the country as a nation.

## Nasif Azam

Better capabilities to pursue the lifestyle that we as free and independent citizens want, and to engage with society in meaningful ways. This means enhancing the human capital stocks that we have, while also providing skilled employment opportunities to allow for economic participation and inclusive institutions. Social participation and security should be enhanced through the application of the rule of law. For this to occur, natural capital needs to be made available through sustainable development and research. This will mean that the cost of living is affordable and opportunities are available for future generations.

## Minishka Bradley

A good range of public policies that offer New Zealanders a better education system and increasing cultural equity and availability of opportunity. We need to be treated equally and we must put the question to the government 'Who is a New Zealander?' The government needs to refine the ways in which the retirement and pension are outlined, making them readily available to all New Zealanders so they aren't left without a source of income once they retire.

## Patrick Broman

4 Key Aims:

- a socially just economy
- a culturally competent and multicultural population
- a skilled and productive workforce
- ecological sustainability and pride in place

## Alexandra Bunge

In order for living standards to improve, we have to change the core values within our identity. As a small isolated country, our strengths do not lie in our economy but in our sense of community, relationship and connection between the people and the land. By emphasising relationships and creating a positive, exciting, safe environment to live in, our living standards will increase morale and public involvement.

## Elizabeth Cole

Atua ki nga tangata ki te whenua tetahi ki tetahi. Living relationships with spirituality, the land and each other as fellow human beings.

## Riley Divett

A sense of pride in the nature in which public services are delivered, where fundamental social issues are resolved (high imprisonment, unequal opportunity). Where New Zealand is a destination for life, with strong demand for high value products, and a skilled labour force.

## Tracy Finlayson

Health, sufficient housing, community, family, provision for elderly, cultural diversity, education, economic and social opportunity, living wage, security freedom of opportunity.

## Avril Gillan

A range of state support that is competitive on an international level, particularly education. A workforce with better gender equity. An economy less susceptible to international shocks. A range of regulations in place to ensure our resources are preserved for future generations.

## Wiliame Gucake

A society where everyone starts on a level playing field and opportunities are available to everyone no matter their gender, race or sexual orientation. Living standards where opportunities exist in both the private and public sectors. There needs to be an emphasis on developing human capital and leaders for continuity and sustainability.

## Edward Haslam

A sensible set of policies to manage long-term sustainability; namely in political, environmental and economic areas.

## Ropeti Huntley

The chance to be represented at all levels of decision-making. There is no one face of New Zealand. Most people would like to believe that everyone is being represented. The reality is that the majority of policy making is done by old, white men, which must be changed if living standards are to improve in the future.

## Ngahua Leighton

Equal opportunities for all children starting out in life. This means that a child born in Te Kaha should have the same basic standard of health, education and happiness as a child born in Remuera.

Everyone should have the means available in New Zealand to reach a level of living that they see as desirable – whatever their values.

New Zealanders should feel safe and trust in the government and country.

## William Makea

The overall wellbeing of a people. This incorporates not just economic factors but social and psychological factors as well.

## Jesse Medcalf

A growing economy unrestrained by unnecessary regulatory burdens. New Zealand must take advantage of its small size, embracing creative destruction and new entrepreneurship through methods that promote an adaptable population. The government must refrain from overzealous efforts to protect unsustainable industries. Finally, education investment will ensure an adaptable population, able to take advantage of the vicissitudes of the global economic landscape.

## Renata Mokena-Lodge

Recognition of the wellbeing of our people as our fundamental priority. Tangible acknowledgement of the interconnectedness of society and a commitment to protecting human dignity.

## Abbas Nazari

New Zealanders with a sense of wellbeing. This is the crux of a higher standard of living, rather than focusing on the monetary aspect of one's existence. The future New Zealand will measure its standard of living by accounting for its natural environment, health and wellbeing, personal happiness and the freedom to pursue opportunities. Calculating one's earnings will be on par with these other factors. Balance economic growth with equal importance of environment and freedom and equality.

## Erin Roxburgh

Deliver New Zealanders a fair and equal playing field in life.

Enable all New Zealanders to be able to choose their path in life, free from how they start out socially, culturally or financially.

## Wiremu Stone

Co-governance structure between government and Māori to close the gap between Māori and non-Māori and the disproportional distribution of income and the overrepresentation of Māori among negative statistics. If New Zealand solves this inequality then less people will be on the benefit or in prison, and the burden of welfare on the economy will decrease as a whole.

## Kristian Tekie

More than just increases in incomes. Living standards increase when freedom of expression and human rights are enforced. An important aspect of higher living standards includes the reduction of classism. An improved quality of life may in turn increase economic activity, due to

more positive attitudes and environments with more social cohesion.

## Milovale Tiatia

To develop the process of nurturing opportunities provided to individuals to a standard that will positively impact their capabilities and well-being in general. Furthermore, with the rapid rate our sociological, behavioural, psychological and cultural needs are growing, income and economic growth will no longer be the core and most influential aspect that will affect living standards/wellbeing. There will need to be more of an emphasis on the other dimensions (that will affect an individual's well-being).

## Erana Walker

Better education opportunities that take into account that not all people learn the same way. A recognition of the different cultures in New Zealand and taking their values into account. Sustainable industries that provide good employment for everyone. A 'REAL' clean green environment that takes into account those social aspects. A government with policy makers who actually have grassroots knowledge and focus when making their decisions – 'Getting out and seeing the true aspects of their policy making'.

## Leilani Walker

A society in which public policies both operate in an interdisciplinary, transparent manner which allow individuals to make informed choices. This will provide a sustainable, stable environment in which those choices translate into optimal outcomes for that individual's personal fulfilment.

## Otene Wineera

Ensuring that everybody has the chance to gain a higher education. A life where families do not have to worry about not being able to feed their children. A place where families don't have to move to other countries just to earn better pay.

## Raymond Wong

A variety of collective measures to raise economic growth, social infrastructure, moral fiber, sustainability and social equality in New Zealand. This must be supported by a similar mindset, in recognising that the measure of living standards is both tangible and intangible.

## Angela Yiavasis

More equal opportunities for citizens to achieve wellbeing. Living standards are not simply a monetary measure. There should be a minimum material standard of living, e.g. housing insulation, the opportunity to be educated and find employment upon completion of education. Citizens are entitled to a healthy environment (e.g. pollution regulation). More gender equality, as in Scandinavia, would also lead to better well-being. Living standards will be high if they are sustainable and keep up an ideal state of society. Also cultural values are a significant part of New Zealand's living standards.


# stress testing the framework

Treasury describes living standards as involving more than just income or GDP: they include a broad range of factors which impact on well-being (such as trust, education, health and environmental quality). The *Living Standards Framework* (see following page) identifies five dimensions that Treasury thinks are the important factors to consider for achieving higher living standards. The dimensions include: *economic growth, sustainability for the future, increasing equity, social infrastructure and managing risks.*


Through three case studies, (1) Natural Capital: Marlborough Sounds, (2) Physical Capital: Housing, and (3) Human Capital: Growing Talent, we evaluated the functionality of the Treasury's *Living Standards Framework*.

Each of the case study sessions took approximately two and a half hours. They were selected and designed to test different aspects of public policy against the *Living Standards Framework*. Importantly, the Framework is intended to be used as a complementary input to the policy process, rather than an analytical, prioritisation or decision-making tool in its own right. Hence the case studies and the speakers aimed to test only certain aspects of the Framework, exploring the input and processes rather than the decisions.

The case studies are briefly described on the right. We were asked not to focus on making a decision but to explore the territory. This led to a broad discussion within each of the five groups. When groups presented their thoughts, we found there was a great deal of common ground. Generally each group discussed a range of common issues, following a similar sequence. We have tried to show the themes running through the discussion by listing the overarching questions that were discussed below each case study. By doing so we hope to show how we came to our suggestions discussed on page 4.



**CASE STUDY 1**  
**Natural Capital:**  
**MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS**




## Case Study 1

### Natural Capital – Marlborough Sounds


This case study was about testing the Framework by focusing on the use of a specific regional resource – salmon farming in the Marlborough Sounds. The example is both practical and topical. It explores a situation where stakeholders' goals are conflicted and how regulatory responses are created to manage policy knots where competing uses exist. It raises issues about *social infrastructure* (iwi perspective), *economic growth* (economic outcomes for New Zealand rather than the company) and *sustainability for the future* (the application of the precautionary approach).

#### We discussed:

1. What values/ideas did you have difficulty reconciling with the Framework?
2. Would adding a sixth cultural dimension to the Framework help reconcile these?
3. Have tensions between cultural and commercial interests been framed as mutually exclusive? If so can these tensions be reconciled?
4. Is the current consultation process with iwi effective? If not, what should be taken into account when looking to improve it?
5. Is there enough accountability and transparency in the current process to allow substantive input from all relevant stakeholders?
6. How should tensions between local risk and national gain be considered and will the benefits of these salmon farms be distributed nationally?
7. What extra issues are raised by having long (35 year) leases?



**CASE STUDY 2**  
**Physical Capital:**  
**HOUSING**



## Case Study 2

### Physical Capital – Housing

This case study was about testing the Framework by focusing on a shared national goal – how to house the nation. However, a multitude of policy problems operate at a range of levels in an organised but complex state. Hence the policy knot focuses on how to build homes to meet the needs of our children. The case study includes themes of short-termism, investment, public/private partnerships, national governance versus local governance, labour, unions, product quality and logistics.

#### We discussed:

1. As this policy issue is multi-faceted, how can we go about identifying possible unintended consequences and are some demographics more negatively affected by social housing policy than others?
2. What issues does the privatisation of the retirement sector raise?
3. How do we increase long-term sustainability of social housing?
4. What place do cultural considerations have in social housing policy?
5. What issues are raised by policies incentivising people to move out of social housing?
6. What processes will be helpful in creating a hierarchy of needs/values to determine who qualifies for social housing and who does not?
7. What lifestyle factors need to be considered when designing social housing policy? How should this be balanced against other factors, such as cost and affordability?



**CASE STUDY 3**  
**Human Capital:**  
**GROWING TALENT**



## Case Study 3

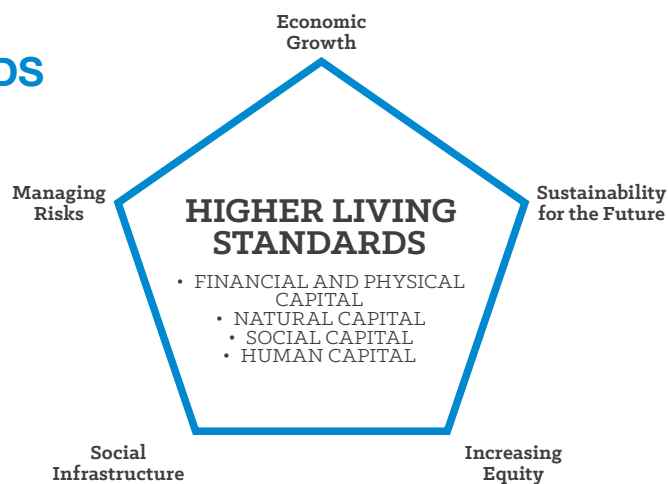
### Human Capital – Growing Talent

This case study was about testing the Framework by focusing on an aspirational goal – the creation of a talent-based economy by focusing on education as a means of providing value, growing wealth and creating happiness. It is the only case study that focuses on foresight. It aims to stretch the imagination to create new problem definitions/new boundaries and therefore new policy opportunities.

#### We discussed:

1. How do you encourage young people into particular career paths that respond to the job market, avoiding a mismatch of graduates and job availability? Could Year 13 be turned into a more productive year, designed to better grow and connect talent?
2. What features of an education system encourage young people to be innovative and creative?
3. Are we placing too great an emphasis on academic and higher level education, instead of focusing on a more holistic approach that values different types of knowledge and career choices?
4. Would a more holistic approach encourage parents without an academic background to be more involved in their children's education, knowing that their own knowledge is also valued?
5. Would this create a possibility for more emphasis on the importance and value of different cultural understandings?
6. Is health and safety becoming a barrier to education for young people? If so how can this be mitigated?
7. What needs to be taken into consideration when thinking about incentivising teachers?

# TREASURY'S LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK



## WE FOUND

We found the strengths of the Framework were that the *economic growth* and *sustainability for the future* components of the Framework were conducive to asking well-defined questions about policy implications. This is in part due to the fact that there is a pre-existing paradigm around studying these concepts, particularly their proxy indicators of GDP and pollution respectively. *Sustainability for the future* also allowed us to consider implications of policy for *tāngata whenua* and the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The weak points existed in relation to the *increasing equity* and *social infrastructure* dimensions. In part this was due to the fact that these concepts are ambiguous and easily misunderstood. While it is important for the Framework to be a broad tool for looking at policy, conceptual clarity is important to allow analysts to be clear in providing evidence based information to decision-makers. The concept of *increasing equity* suffered from the usual problems of

moral and cultural relativism in what people value and in making distinctions between fairness and equality. Meanwhile, the *social infrastructure* dimension was too complicated and we felt the role of cultural considerations and social institutions, such as the rule of law, were under-emphasised.

It was found that *managing risks* as a qualitative factor of analysing policy presented a set of pre-determined factors, which has the potential to remove any acceptability or absorbing of risk taking, thereby constricting innovation. We suggest renaming *managing risks* with *resilience*, which encompasses not just surviving, but thriving in an uncertain environment. It means creating an economy with bounce, where risk is incorporated and rewarded. You can't prepare for everything and we need more than just formal risk management procedures. Enhancing resilience involves developing the adaptive capacities to roll with the punches delivered by unforeseen challenges.

Our stress-testing highlighted the importance of noting that the dimensions can be complementary and that trade-offs must be made on a policy-by-policy basis. In addition, the Framework should not be taken as prescriptive but as a general guideline to what we consider to define progress and influence policy.

After careful analysis of the case studies, we were able to better understand some of the problems that many policy analysts face and in particular how different situations can be examined against the Framework. Some of the dimensions we found easy to apply, such as *economic growth* and *sustainability for the future*. However, we found *increasing equity*, *social infrastructure* and *managing risks* in their current form particularly difficult to apply, although we believe these contain extremely important concepts.

## FROM STRESS TESTING THE FRAMEWORK WE DEVELOPED THE FOLLOWING THREE IDEAS:

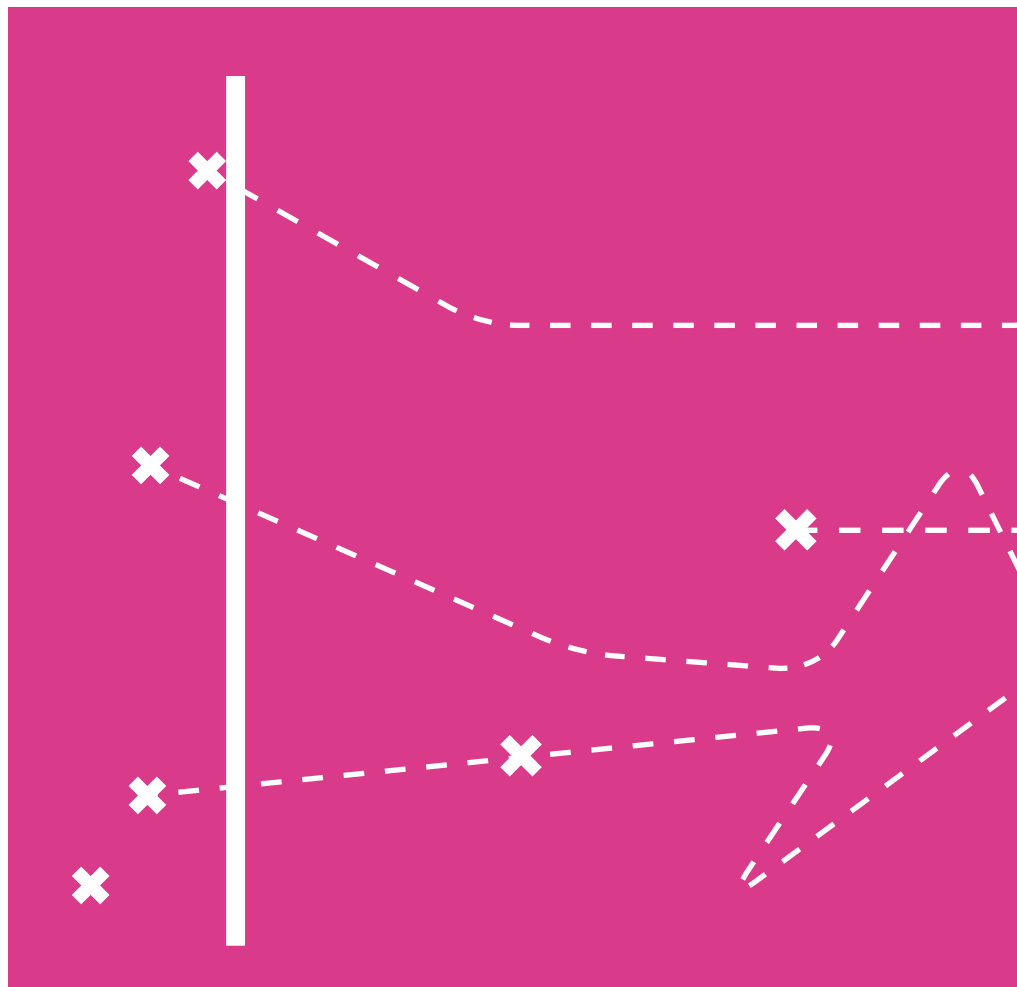
- 1) THE LIVING STANDARDS METAPHOR,
- 2) THE CONSIDERATION OF A 6<sup>TH</sup> DIMENSION, AND
- 3) ENVISIONING THE FRAMEWORK AS A PRISM TO COMMUNICATE THE UNDERLYING PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

# the living standards metaphor

**When determining higher living standards as a group, we wanted to create a statement that was concise, simple and evoked thought. Most of all, we wanted a statement that came from the heart.**

We deliberately steered clear of excessive economic terminology and traditional frameworks. We didn't want the statement to act as a checklist, but instead we wanted to invite the reader to question their own values and then redefine what higher living standards means to them. We used our word cloud and individual statements on pages 1 and 2 respectively as the starting point for this discussion.

We also wanted to find a way to communicate these ideas through a metaphor, to help promote a broader understanding of our statement. To achieve this, we looked at higher living standards from an individual's perspective to society as a whole. Everyone has the right to achieve satisfaction in life. This satisfaction is felt in a variety of ways, unique to the individual. In life, each individual has their own personal dreams and aspirations that they race to achieve, whether this is to become a millionaire or to retire spending their days fishing on Lake Taupo. Importantly everyone's journey is unique; it is not linear but instead is influenced by a range of diverse and interwoven events, leading to numerous changes in direction before the goal is finally reached.



Our concern is that not everyone starts at the starting line together. We believe it is critical that public policy is not measured in terms of equality (an input focus) but of equity (an outcome focus). This is illustrated in the diagram above, with crosses representing a range of starting positions and the 'dreams and ambitions' representing the ultimate goal. The vertical line represents the current starting point for most New Zealanders.

However, some start ahead of the line, due to being born into wealth and status where education and connections provide an insider advantage. Others start behind the line, as a result of poverty, poor health or conflict, which in turn limits resources and options. In other words, even if two people undertake a similar journey to achieve comparable dreams and ambitions, one is likely to be significantly more advantaged than

the other (demonstrated by the dotted line with two crosses). The cross on the bottom without the dotted line symbolises the most disadvantaged; those that cannot see a path ahead, as they are so busy surviving they do not even realise there is a race being run.

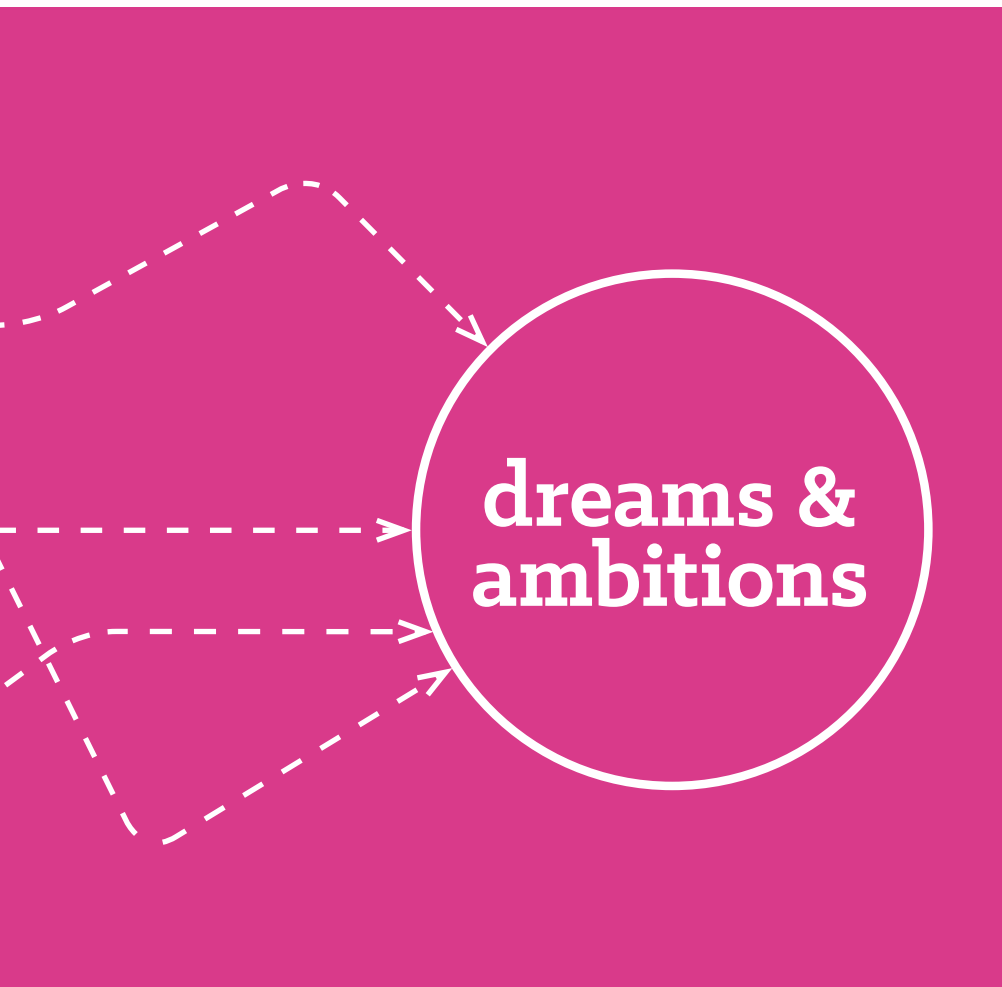
This is illustrated by the inspirational story of US Supreme Court Judge, Sonia Sotomayor. Justice Sotomayor graduated with highest honours from Princeton and Yale. She then went on to become the first Latina Supreme

Court judge in America. Justice Sotomayor was helped through her journey by a policy of positive discrimination. The policy encouraged Ivy League colleges to widen their search for students to include the usually overlooked, high achieving children of underprivileged schools. She explained her earlier education by stating *'How could I have begun a race that I didn't even know was being run.'*

It was through this policy that Justice Sotomayor was able to gain traction on her jour-

ney; achieving much more than could realistically be expected of someone with her background.

Without solid foundations some people will face cracks or uneven playing fields on their journey. Without the light, many people will lose sight of their path ahead. Good public policy will ensure light is shed on the path through protection and access to human rights, a quality education, a healthy environment and a stable economy.



**WE BELIEVE IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THOSE IN INFLUENTIAL PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS TO ENSURE THAT EVERY NEW ZEALANDER'S PATH BEGINS AT THE STARTING LINE. IT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC POLICY TO PROVIDE THE FOUNDATIONS OF EQUALITY ON WHICH THE PATHS ARE BUILT. IT IS THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL TO CHOOSE THEIR PATH AND CONQUER IT AS THEY SEE FIT.**

# the 6<sup>th</sup> dimension culture

**When stress testing the *Living Standards Framework*, we brainstormed as a group and wrote down all thoughts, considerations and queries that the issues raised. However, when we tried to apply these ideas to the Framework, we found that there was a gap between what was driving our thinking and the five dimensions available.**

These ideas did not fit neatly in one dimension; instead they straddled uncomfortably between the *social infrastructure* and *increasing equity* dimensions. This resulted in a lack of clarity, meaning these important drivers were too easily ignored and lost.

We discussed two potential solutions: the *social infrastructure* dimension should be redefined or an additional dimension should be included, one that requires an assessment of a policy's impact on culture. The Framework's current dimension of *social infrastructure* concerns social institutions that uphold principles, whereas the 6<sup>th</sup> dimension concerns values, rights and responsibilities and a genuine desire to develop cohesion within society. This cultural consideration should extend past the traditional Crown/Māori analysis to consider all other cultures of and within New Zealand.

## WHY

For the Framework to legitimately guide policy decision-making, it needs to be tailored to New Zealand's unique circumstances, which includes the Crown's obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi and our

diverse demographics. Having a cultural dimension considered independently will interplay effectively with the other factors. Culture is a factor which cannot be assigned a monetary value, encouraging a more holistic approach that will bring hindsight and foresight into the analysis. Building culturally aware systems on top of a foundation of shared values will promote inclusiveness and trust between different peoples within society.

**NEW ZEALAND AS A NATION HAS ITS OWN UNDERSTANDINGS AND WAYS OF DOING THINGS. THIS NEEDS TO BE RECOGNISED AND REFLECTED IN ANY FRAMEWORK THAT PURPORTS TO IMPROVE LIVING STANDARDS.**

## WHAT

The Crown has recognised its role in guarding culture through the Crown/Māori grievance redress that has occurred in the past decades. What we need to focus on now are consultation procedures that ensure the government is able to pro-actively protect the multitude of cultures in New Zealand and avoid future conflict. Part of this is considering how a policy may affect culture at the beginning stages of the policy-making process.

## HOW

In proposing this 6<sup>th</sup> addition to the Framework, we encourage policy-makers to comprehensively consider all potentially affected groups and any consequential degradation that could occur as a result of new policies or policy reform.

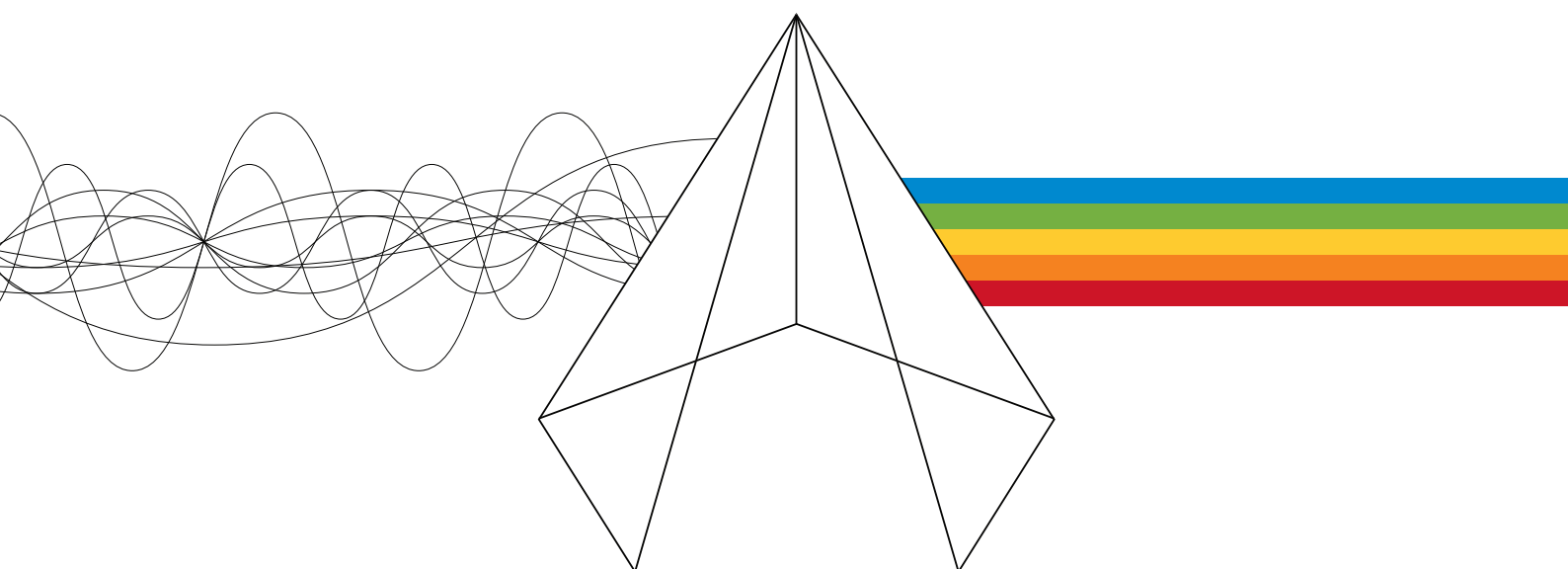


# envisioning the framework

**We envision the *Living Standards Framework* as a lens with which to both analyse specific policies and to provide a framework for meaningful discussion.**

Policy analysis requires evaluation of a myriad of complex, inter-related factors. The Framework makes it possible to systematically assess the factors in a way that promotes clarity and helps to identify the different considerations moving forward. The prism represents this.

The scrambled lines represent the noise that often surrounds big complex problems; the issues and ideas that require consideration. The straight colourful lines represent the impact of that noise being transformed by the prism – the clarity of thought that emerges after applying a framework that invites a wide, broad and deep discussion.

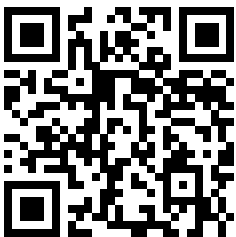


**THE DIMENSIONS OF THE LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK HIGHLIGHT THE DIFFERENT KEY AREAS THAT WE MUST CONSIDER WHEN ANALYSING PUBLIC POLICY. AS THE PRISM HIGHLIGHTS, HOWEVER, THEY ARE ALL FUNDAMENTALLY CONNECTED AND STEM FROM AN INTEGRATED UNDERSTANDING OF LIVING STANDARDS. WHILE IT IS IMPORTANT TO FOCUS ON THE INDIVIDUAL DIMENSIONS, WE MUST ALSO RECOGNISE THE SUBSTANTIAL INTERACTION THAT OCCURS BETWEEN THEM.**

# concluding remarks

**LIVING STANDARDS SHOULD BE THE KEY CONSIDERATION IN ALL PUBLIC POLICY. THEY REPRESENT OUR UNIQUE NEEDS, DESIRES, AND ASPIRATIONS AS NEW ZEALANDERS. WE SEE THE TREASURY'S LIVING STANDARDS FRAMEWORK AS AN IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS THIS END, BUT THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE. WE BELIEVE THAT CULTURE SHOULD BE MORE FUNDAMENTALLY INTEGRATED INTO THE FRAMEWORK, IN ORDER TO FULLY REPRESENT OUR WAY OF DOING THINGS AND THE UNIQUE DIVERSITY OF AOTEAROA. ADDING THIS '6<sup>TH</sup> DIMENSION' WOULD MAKE THE PRISM MORE POWERFUL, AS WE SEEK TO INTEGRATE A MORE COMPLETE PERSPECTIVE ON KIWI LIVING STANDARDS IN OUR PUBLIC POLICY.**

## outputs



In addition to this booklet we have produced two YouTube videos. The first was designed to communicate the *Living Standards Framework* for everyday New Zealanders, what we called the 'Living Legend' skit. The second is where we present our collective ideas for the first time to the public on the final day of the workshop. We have synthesised our individual statements on page 2 into our joint statement, located on the back of the booklet.



**'The Living Legend' skit on YouTube**



**The Final Presentation on YouTube**

# participants



Nasra Abdi  
Ben Abraham  
Tipene Apatu  
Nasif Azam  
Minishka Bradley  
Patrick Broman  
Alexandra Bunge  
Elizabeth Cole  
Riley Divett  
Tracy Finlayson

Avril Gillan  
Wiliame Gucake  
Edward Haslam  
Ropeti Huntley  
Ngahuia Leighton  
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# special thanks

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[www.livingstandardsnz.org](http://www.livingstandardsnz.org)

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**THOUGH WE AS NEW ZEALANDERS ALL EMBARK ON ALTERNATIVE JOURNEYS, IT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC POLICY TO LIGHT THE PATH. THIS MEANS ENSURING EVERY INDIVIDUAL FINDS THE BEGINNING OF THAT PATHWAY AND HAS THE MEANS TO REACH THEIR OWN IDEAL OF HAPPINESS.**

W. J. Lark

W. J. Lark

**TO ACHIEVE THIS IDEAL, THE PATHWAY NEEDS TO ENCOMPASS EQUAL OPPORTUNITY, QUALITY EDUCATION AND A SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY, BUILT ON FOUNDATIONS OF EQUITY AND THE RECOGNITION OF DIVERSITY WITHIN NEW ZEALAND.**

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