

Social Wellbeing Agency replaces Social Investment Agency with new approach

20 February 2020

The Minister for Social Development Carmel Sepuloni today announced a new approach that continues to broaden the Government's social sector focus from a narrow, investment approach to one centred on people and wellbeing.

Minister Sepuloni said redefining the previous approach to social investment by combining science, data and lived experience better serves the needs of New Zealanders.

“Under the previous Government people were being treated as a fiscal liability, so we made the conscious decision to change that. I asked the Social Investment Agency to talk to the community to see what social wellbeing meant to them and how we as a Government could put that into practice.

“The new approach delivers on a people-focused model of looking at people and their needs because data is just one snapshot of people's lives. We improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders by taking into account lived experiences – people are more than just numbers.

“Investing for social wellbeing requires a wide range of information to best support long term wellbeing. Government agencies will now look at the wider impact on people when making decisions about services they provide. This aligns with this Government's commitment to improving wellbeing for New Zealanders.”

Part of the change is realigning and renaming the Social Investment Agency to the Social Wellbeing Agency.

“We have already started to implement new principles within the social sector. One of the first examples of what our new improving social wellbeing approach means for research, and for the Social Wellbeing Agency, is the findings of a collaborative project with The Southern Initiative called *Having a Baby in South Auckland*.

“The wellbeing approach made a marked difference to the outcomes of the project. For example, the project found that fathers often stop earning money from paid work right around the time that baby is born,” said Minister Sepuloni.

“The research showed that fathers with lower qualifications display a pattern of being outside of paid employment before and after the birth of their child. In some cases they left jobs and or took job seeker benefits. For some this was driven by a desire for fathers to be at home with the mother and baby.

“This insight highlights the different types of stressors people experience in different circumstances, and that the right kind of information is key to delivering good outcomes for people.”

Minister Sepuloni said the Social Wellbeing Agency will serve as the 'glue' for social sector coordination and will enable a strategic cross-sector approach the Government needs to deliver. The Social Wellbeing Agency name change is due to come into effect from 19 March 2020.

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