

Whāia te Tika

Seek Justice

Justice & Peace Commission Catholic Diocese of Auckland



Winter 2023

Farewell to Peter Garrick

Commission's long-serving Executive Secretary steps down. See Editorial, P2.

ABOVE: Peter Garrick (front right) is shown with members of the Justice & Peace Commission. Photo: Sarah Sparks



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Commission bids farewell to Peter Garrick



I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Peter Garrick as he takes his leave from the position of Executive Secretary of the Auckland Justice & Peace Commission. He has earned the Auckland Catholic diocese a reputation among Parliamentarians, in particular the select committees, for well researched and thought out submissions, both oral and written. His ability to pick out an issue, collate the relevant arguments in collaboration with committee members, write a submission, then inveigle another member of the Commission to assist in presenting it has been astounding during the years I have been Chair of the Commission.

I have known Peter for a long time. I had heard of him in his justice work in Christchurch and Palmerston North dioceses, and also when as Executive Secretary of the Diocesan Pastoral Council I met him as the new Eastern regional representative in 2004. He was elected to Chair the DPC from 2006 to 2008.

He then became Chair of the Justice & Peace Commission from 2009- 2013. He took on the role of Executive secretary in 2016, resigned in 2019, but then stayed on part time until 2023.

He has been balancing his two loves, justice and teaching for the past few years, as well as experiencing the loss of his wife, Judith.

I don't know quite how he has managed all the juggling, although I guess one clue is the time on the e-mails that come through - often after midnight!

His teaching and tutoring has always been to encourage those who are struggling; working for the Marist Alternative Education group for part of that time.

He has always gone the extra mile too, in delivering in person the *Whaia te Tika* newsletter to parishes,

dropping in quarterly to parish offices to spread the good news.

Peter, you have been an inspiration to us all. Your hard mahi for justice and peace has been amazing. It is an area that gets overlooked by many in our parishes, but your work has ensured it always stays on the agenda. Your legacy is immeasurable. I'm so glad you are going to stay on the Commission and be there as a mentor and adviser. We wish you all the best and blessings be upon you.

I also want to pay tribute to **Susanne Rehder Montgomerie** who has been a member, then convenor of, the Environmental & Sustainability committee for almost five years. In 2020 she was elected to become co-deputy chairperson together with Fr Matthew Vadakkevettuvazhiyl. Soon afterwards she stepped into the role of acting chairperson and in October 2020 became the deputy chair, a role she has held ever since. Susanne has been passionate about the environment, synthesising complex Vatican documents, sending green tips and messages to the diocesan website and to parishes on Earth Day, World Environment Day (June 5), Laudato Si' Week (end of May) and for the Season of Creation. She has been a tireless advocate for the environment, a meticulous proofreader for our newsletter, reports and minutes, and a valuable member of the Executive. She and her husband are visiting her native Denmark and she has decided that someone else should take on that role.

Pat Lythe



Chair, Justice & Peace Commission
Editor, *Whaia te Tika*
June 2023

The Justice & Peace Commission has welcomed the Government's 2023 Budget support for Early Childhood Education for young families and free public transport for children in the 2023 Budget. However, Justice & Peace Commission spokesperson Loraine Elliott said she was disappointed the Budget contained little to alleviate intergenerational poverty. She said the government continued to ignore the key recommendation of the Social Welfare Advisory Group to substantially increase basic Social Welfare payments so families can support themselves. "The promised relief for families in the face of rising costs seems to be completely missing in action," Elliott said. "What sort of society are we when \$71 billion dollars can be found for necessary infrastructure, but only scraps of funding for families?"

"Only scraps of funding for families" - Commission challenges shortfalls in Budget

"Families are so overwhelmed by rising food and rent costs that they are being forced to choose between paying the rent to avoid homelessness and feeding hungry children."

Housing

The Commission urged the Government to work with Community Housing Providers to tackle the housing crisis.

"While an extra 3000 public housing units by June 2025 is a positive step it will have only a minimal effect taking into account the large number of households still on the waiting list and the number of demolitions of existing housing stock," she said.

Additional support for Māori housing was gratifying,

especially for whanau displaced by extreme weather across the North Island.

However, it was disappointing the Budget had not provided more funding to extend the Progressive Home Ownership Scheme which helped families buy homes through shared ownership.

Disability services

The Commission was pleased with Budget 2023's increase in funding for disability services, including the allocation of \$27.3m to end the Minimum Wage Exemption, which allowed disabled people to be paid at rates lower than minimum wage.



Farewell from Peter Garrick



I really enjoy farewells and had a whole series of very enjoyable ones in 2019. However, circumstances meant that somehow I never quite left the building. It's been an exciting seven years as Executive Secretary, preceded by seven years in various roles with the Justice & Peace Commission. I'm leaving now just to cut down my work load a little while I continue my first love of teaching and tutoring.

Special thanks to Bishop Pat and Bishop Steve for their continuing commitment to Justice & Peace advocacy. I've been inspired by Loraine, work colleagues Ann-Marie and Michael Otto and especially Pat Lythe, whose work with the Diocesan Pastoral Council over many decades provided outstanding formation for me and numerous others in the Diocese.

But most of all thanks to the outstandingly generous members of our Commission, Working Committees and Parish representatives who keep alive the dream of Jesus to place the poorest and most vulnerable at the heart of our work.

The past 100 years of capitalism shows we can't afford not to alleviate the devastation of poverty

The IRD has just reported that the 311 wealthiest New Zealanders pay only 9% tax, less than half of the average Kiwi.

The past century of capitalism has been a game of two halves. The years 1930 to 1980 saw some of the greatest social and economic gains. The Great Depression of 1929 saw millions thrown out of work and an astronomical level of poverty, showing that significant changes were necessary. John Maynard Keynes, the most influential economist of his day, worked with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt of the USA to bring about social democratic capitalism - capitalism with a human face. A strong state and robust regulations were necessary for capitalism to work for all: Regulations for the market, unions to protect workers, taxation to redistribute income and reduce inequality and social welfare to help the unemployed, the sick and the elderly.

Prime Minister Joseph Michael Savage presided over the birth of the modern welfare state in New Zealand. With strong Christian values, they say that he "smelt of the Church bazaar, not the barricades."

Neither major party wanted to reduce peoples' benefits. A massive housing programme provided tens of thousands of state houses. State Advances



ABOVE: *Kushlan Sugathapala is a prolific researcher and writer on social justice issues and a frequent contributor to the media. He was keynote speaker at the recent meeting of the Justice & Peace Commission, providing an overview of the development of capitalism in the past century and highlighting key areas of concern in New Zealand. His key argument is that not taking action and not changing the way things are done will only exacerbate what is already a dire situation for too many people. This is an edited extract of his presentation. kushlan.sugathapala@icloud.com*

Corporation offered low-interest loans for low-income earners. We had less than 1% unemployment from 1936 to 1976. In those days one income could support a family.

However, Māori and Pacifica were largely excluded from these benefits for many years.

The collapse of wool prices in 1969 was probably the greatest shock. We lost our primary export market when the UK joined the European Common Market in 1973. The oil price shocks of the 1970s and the failure of the Think Big Programme left our economy in a parlous state.

This period saw the rise of today's extreme version of capitalism. Milton Friedman, from the Chicago School of Economics, influenced

Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher to unravel much of the social gains of the previous 50 years. The focus was on individuals rather than society, competition over collaboration, favouring the wealthy, a reduced role for the state, less regulation and low taxes. Rogernomics in New Zealand changed New Zealand into one of modern capitalism's most extreme versions. We have continued to pay dearly for Rogernomics in terms of crime, health and poverty.

Our prison population increased from 2000 in the 1980s to 8000 today. Gang numbers escalated in the 1980s as poverty increased sharply.

From P4.

Our prison rehabilitation levels are poor. Half the inmates have mental health issues and alcohol and drug addiction issues.

Health

The factors determining people's health include poverty, stable employment, healthy homes, social inclusion and non-discrimination.

Major issues are related to obesity, heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Māori and Pacifica are the worst affected group. Deaths from heart disease are twice the average, cancer three times higher, renal failure from diabetes four times higher, and amputations three times higher. New Zealand has the highest youth suicide rate in the developed world.

Social Housing

Only 5400 social housing units have been added in six years of the Labour government, while Community Housing providers added 6500. The waiting list is now 24,000. The National Party's record is even worse, recording a decrease of 6000 during their last period in government.

Proper housing, coupled with home medical visits is vital to many New Zealanders' health. According to Max Rashbrooke from the Healthy Housing Pilot Programme, refurbishing state houses and visiting nurses would reduce hospital admissions by two thirds.

Unemployment remains a significant problem, with benefits costing \$3.5 billion each year.

Could social spending be the way ahead for New Zealand?

Social spending is an investment likely to pay for itself with savings from improved health, lower crime, unemployment, and more people pulled out of poverty contributing to the economy.

Fixing the base benefits is the most essential thing that can be implemented reasonably quickly.

The total costs of the main benefits is \$11 billion. An increase of 30% will cost \$3.3 billion. It can be implemented over three years, bringing the social benefits closer to Superannuation rates. The accommodation supplement needs special attention as families on the supplement spend an average of 50% of their income on rent. This needs to be indexed to rent inflation.

While these may look like big numbers, we have to look at them in the context of a government budget of \$137 billion.

Taxes

If the richest 311 paid their fair share of taxes, an additional \$3 billion would be raised.

In the medium term, there would be substantial savings from alleviating poverty in spending on health and criminal justice.

Costs would be reduced if social housing ramped up and the unemployment insurance scheme came through.

It's hard to fault what the Labour government has done for the

Kushlan Sugathapala argues that the key to solving New Zealand's many problems is to improve social spending in key areas and says it will pay for itself.



ABOVE: Former Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson.

low-income earners by increasing the minimum wage.

This must continue until the living wage is reached.

We may need to do something for sole parents whose material hardship rate is 29%, much higher than the EU average.

Former Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson said he was "Proud that this government has significantly increased benefit payments."

Benefits were never restored to the pre-1991 levels but increases have now been indexed to wages. However, nearly 40% of children in beneficiary households still live in material hardship.

Unfortunately, neither major party is likely to initiate a significant increase. However, that could change if a smaller party ends up in a strong bargaining position.

SWAP committee will focus on Social Justice Forum

The focus for the Social Welfare/Anti-Poverty Committee this year will be the Social Justice Forum in South Auckland planned for Thursday, September 14.

Convenor Deacon Sanele said this would coincide with Social Justice Week and the run-up to the general election. The forum was planned to ensure candidates took some accountability for issues that were affecting the society, such as the cost of living, family poverty and violence.

"The SWAP committee has been reviewing its vision and purpose," Deacon Sanele said.

"The committee feels it is vital to work with young people."

At the committee's February meeting nine young people joined the committee members.

The role of the Justice & Peace Commission was outlined. Some of the young people attended the Commission meeting in March 11.

Call to repeal Euthanasia Bill

As the national elections approach, Human Life Committee convenor Catherine Gillies has called for the repeal of New Zealand's Euthanasia Bill.

She described it as deeply flawed.

Bishop Steve said the Church needed to make up ground in this area.

The New Zealand Bishops have decided to revise and re-issue their 1997 Consistent Ethic of Life document.

"People will come where they see life" says Bishop Steve



People come where they see life. That was the message from Bishop Steve Lowe (above) as he discussed the Reshaping programme that will help determine the future of the Church in the Catholic Diocese of Auckland.

As Catholics celebrate the 175th anniversary of the establishment of the diocese the Bishop said there were several areas to reflect on. Bishop Steve shared these thoughts:

Structure: Are we in the right places to serve needs? For instance, there are no Catholic Social Services in North.

Schools: Our population profile has changed, leaving some schools with decreased rolls.

Parishes: Are they based where people are? Is our best model of governance one of co-responsibility? We need to upgrade some buildings, but can we afford to cling to empty ones? How do we avoid an over-reliance on the overseas priests who contribute to our Diocese?

Liturgy: There is a need for vibrancy, especially in music. How do we better engage youth?

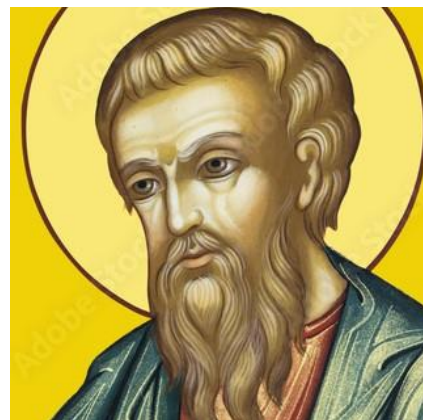
Mission: We must focus on going out to serve people and building a community of support. People come where they see life.

Bishop Steve also discussed Ropu Māori, the new model for New Zealand Bishops to engage with Māori Catholics.

This involves Māori representatives sitting with the Bishops for part of their twice yearly meetings.

He said the first experience of this was extremely positive. – **Peter Garrick**

Successful retreat



Members of the Justice & Peace Commission attended a successful retreat at St Francis Retreat Centre on June 10.

Led by Br Kieran Fenn, FMS, the day focused on the Gospel of St Matthew.

The retreat explored the historical context in which the Gospel was written and its intention. Specific issues investigated also included life and leadership in the church and the role of women.

Government not doing enough about climate change says Commission

The Justice & Peace Commission has criticised what it says is the government's inadequate response to climate change.

Spokesperson Loraine Elliott said the Government's support for the establishment of a network of charging stations for electric vehicles was welcome, as was the continuation of the Warmer Kiwi Homes initiative.

"However, apart from the post-Budget announcement of support for the electrification of the Glenbrook steel mill furnace, little action seems to be being taken to do our share to take Climate Change seriously by reducing New Zealand's emissions," she said.

Where to get help

Depression Helpline-0800 543 354

Kidline:0800 942 8787

Lifeline: 0800 543 354 Free text 4357

Need to Talk? Call or text 1737

Victim Support: 0800 842 846

Rainbow Youth: 09 376 4155

Samaritans: 0800 726 666

What's Up: 0800 942 8787

Youth line: 0800 376 633 or text 2342

Shine (get-help):0508 744 633

Safe to talk 0800 044 334 FT 4334

Better Blokes: 09 378 6812

Rape Crisis Centre: 0800 88 33 00

Sexual Abuse HELP Foundation: 09 623 1700

Youthline 0800 376 635 Free text 234

Women's Refuge 0800 733 843

Suicide Crisis Helpline 0800 543354

We can do something about climate change if we don't despair: RDC

The Religious Diversity Centre has been holding a series of webinars on climate change. According to Mary Eastham from the RDC Climate Action Work Group the main message of the online meetings was that people can do something about climate change if they do not despair.

Webinars have featured guest speakers as diverse as primate expert Dr Jane Goodall and Rabbi Dean Shapiro.

The climate change sessions have examined change in our region through the youth leaders of the Pacific Climate Warriors. Most of the webinars were hosted by journalist Rod Oram.

At the final webinar, on the theme 'Hope for our world,' on July 5, the keynote speaker was former New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark.

For more information, go to <https://rdc.org.nz/rdc-webinar-series-2023/>

Fight inflation and climate change – grow your own veges!



A combination of weather, war and climate change has pushed supermarket prices through the roof. But there is a way to help your budget - and the planet – by growing your own vegetables.

Fortunately, there are dozens of websites offering advice and tips for first time gardeners, telling you how to get your seeds in the ground, nourish them and then enjoy the fruits of your labour.

You could begin by looking at <https://tuigarden.co.nz/inspiration-hub/ideas-and-inspiration/a-beginners-guide-to-vegetable-gardening/>; <https://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/homed/garden/97955008/vegetable-gardening-beginners-guide-to-growing-fruit--vege> or <https://www.bunnings.co.nz/diy-advice/garden/planting-and-growing/how-to-grow-vegetables>.

You don't even need a garden. There are plenty of things you can grow in a pot if you have a deck with good exposure to the sun. If you have a garden and your soil is bad, you can fertilise it or install raised beds.

Uncertainty over future of overstayers troubles Tongans

The resignation of Immigration Minister Michael Wood has left the Tongan community in New Zealand uncertain about the future of a long looked-for amnesty for overstayers.

Wood said during a meeting with the Tongan community in South Auckland last month the government was considering an amnesty, but could not say when a decision would be made.

But with an election looming, advocates of an amnesty do not know what will happen.

New Zealand has not had an amnesty scheme since 2000, when 7000 people were able to apply for residency.

In 2020 the Pacific Leadership Forum petitioned Parliament for an amnesty so overstayers could receive the full range of support during the Covid epidemic. The Petitions Committee recommended Parliament take note of it.

West Papuan talk

West Papuan researcher Veronika Kanem will talk about her work, life as a woman, the production of traditional woven bags and the destruction caused by the palm oil industry at a function on July 29. She is a doctoral student at Auckland University.

It will be held at the Whenua Community Hub at 165 Stoddart Rd in Mt Roskill at 6pm. For more information, contact Del Abcede from Pax Christi at deabcede08@gmail.com



ABOVE: Members of the Pacific Leadership Forum promoting their petition to open up a pathway for overstayers.

In February this year - three years after it was submitted - Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said he would look at it.

Irish example

Ireland recently introduced a programme to allow illegal migrants to gain full legal status.

The scheme is available to adults who have lived in Ireland for four years, or three years for children. Asylum seekers can apply after two years.

Tongan community representative Akilau Manase Lua told Radio New Zealand some Tongans still had nothing to go home to because of last year's volcanic eruption.

Some people were terrified they would be deported.

"They might have been here during the lockdowns and they couldn't go back," Lua told the national broadcaster.

"These people are wanting to find a better life, and what better place than Aotearoa New Zealand?" Lua said.

This story originally appeared in Kaniva Tonga News and is eprinted with permission.

<https://www.kanivatonga.co.nz/>

Justice & Peace Commission Catholic Diocese of Auckland

Website

<http://www.aucklandcatholic.org.nz/c-are-of-the-poor/justicepeace>

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/JusticeAndPeaceCDA/>

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