



NEW ZEALAND COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS  
*Te Kauae Kaimahi*

**Submission of the  
New Zealand Council of Trade Unions  
Te Kauae Kaimahi**

**to the**

**Social Services and Community Committee**

**on the**

**Families Commission Act Repeal Bill**

**P O Box 6645**

**Wellington**

**12 March 2018**

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## 1. Summary of Recommendations

We suggest that the committee:

- 1.1. **note** with concern the loss of independent policy research and evaluation caused by the previous government's decision to disestablish the Social Policy Research and Evaluation Unit (SUPERU) within the Families' Commission.
- 1.2. **recommend** that Parliament consider establishing a new independent Crown agency to provide policy advice and evaluation, including to meet the government's declared intention to promote high-level reporting against social outcomes and wellbeing measures.

## 2. Introduction

- 2.1. This submission is made on behalf of the 30 unions affiliated to the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU). With 320,000 members, the CTU is one of the largest democratic organisations in New Zealand.
- 2.2. The CTU acknowledges Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand and formally acknowledges this through Te Rūnanga o Ngā Kaimahi Māori o Aotearoa (Te Rūnanga) the Māori arm of Te Kauae Kaimahi (CTU) which represents approximately 60,000 Māori workers.
- 2.3. The CTU endorses the submissions of our affiliate unions, the New Zealand Nurses' Organisation (NZNO) and the Public Service Association (PSA).
- 2.4. Unions affiliated to the CTU, especially those representing workers in the public sector broadly defined, valued the Social Policy Research and Evaluation Unit (SUPERU) within the Families' Commission as a source of independent policy advice and evaluation. We regret that the decision of the previous government to disestablish SUPERU has left the Families' Commission unable to fulfil this independent policy function and we recommend that the Committee give consideration to how this capacity could be re-developed and strengthened within a new agency.

### **3. Disestablishing SUPERU was the wrong decision**

- 3.1. The CTU is concerned that the previous government's decision to disestablish the Social Policy Research and Evaluation Unit (SUPERU) within the Families' Commission has resulted in a loss of capacity for providing independent policy advice and evaluation to government, particularly on social policy.
- 3.2. This loss of capacity is especially concerning at a time when government is signalling an intention to promote high-level reporting against social outcomes across the state sector, drawing on the Treasury's Wellbeing Framework.
- 3.3. The decision to disestablish SUPERU was made in the context of the previous government's support for the establishment of a Social Investment Agency (SIA) within the Ministry of Social Development.
- 3.4. However, we do not agree that the SIA is an adequate replacement for SUPERU. The SIA was established to pursue a particular policy agenda of targeted funding, rather than to provide independent policy advice and evaluation. The two agencies are different in both form and purpose and the establishment of one should not have been used as a justification for the disestablishment of the other.
- 3.5. The current government has inherited the disestablishment of SUPERU and the Families Commission as a fait accompli, with key staff having already departed and work programs completed or shifted to other agencies. The remaining step of repealing the Families Commission Act will simply confirm what has already been done in practice.

### **4. Need for new agency to provide social policy research and evaluation**

- 4.1. The CTU would support consideration of a new Crown agency with statutory independence to provide independent social policy research and evaluation across government programmes.
- 4.2. An independent social policy agency could make a valuable contribution to a whole-of-government view on performance against desired social outcomes.
- 4.3. We suggest that the Committee recommend the need for a new agency to inherit and develop the role and capacity that had been established by SUPERU.

- 4.4. As an interim step, the Committee should also seek an assurance from officials that the existing database of policy documents available on the SUPERU website will be maintained in a publicly accessible form.

## **5. Conclusion**

- 5.1. The CTU regrets the loss of capacity for independent policy research and evaluation represented by the disestablishment of SUPERU within the Families Commission.
- 5.2. We recommend that government give serious consideration to the establishment of a new independent Crown agency for policy research and evaluation to fill the gap left by SUPERU and that the Committee reflect this in its report to the House.