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Vinnies back the Living Wage

The Society of St Vincent de Paul in New Zealand is calling for payment of the Living Wage as a replacement for the Minimum Wage to relieve the rapidly mounting pressures on the “working poor” of New Zealand.

Speaking at the Society’s AGM in Nelson (March 29-30), President Gerry Stevens said that over the last 12 months “the Society had begun helping a new class of need, ‘the working poor’. These are people who have fulltime jobs, but their income is such that they live on tight budgets which have no room for unexpected emergencies, such as car repairs or a spike in power bills.

“The cost of living has hit them the hardest. These people along with all the needy, the marginalised, the outcasts and homeless are not a problem to be solved or moved around the corner to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’. They are human beings, just like the rest of us.”

Gerry questioned why when the country needs to ‘get back on track’ it always seems to be lower socio-economic people who carry most of the burden.

Many Vinnies Conferences across the country have reported a big increase in demand for food assistance and other forms of support over the last year. They say an increasing number of clients are in employment. In 2025, the Society distributed 61,359 food parcels and assisted people with 28,624 budgeting and counselling sessions. Furniture was provided for 3,656 households.

Requests for food assistance increased significantly in some parts of Aotearoa New Zealand, says Gerry.

“People are becoming increasingly anxious over food security and their ability to put food on the table. Increasing numbers of requests are coming from working couples who live on a tight budget which is easily upset.”

Gerry said the change in Government and changes in fiscal policy has seen food assistance grants disappear and many food banks have also disappeared, putting more pressure on the Society’s resources.

The Living Wage significantly exceeds the current adult Minimum Wage in New Zealand which is set at \$23.95 per hour. The New Zealand Living Wage is \$28.95 per hour. This voluntary rate is independently calculated to reflect the income necessary for workers to afford basic necessities and live with dignity.

Ends

For further comment:

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