

BOOK REVIEW

Social Policy for Social Work and Human Services in Aotearoa New Zealand: Diverse Perspectives

Jane Maidment and Liz Beddoe (Eds.)
Canterbury University Press, Christchurch, NZ 2016
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This book, as the title suggests, is diverse in its content. Maidment and Beddoe have organised an eye-catching group of writers to complete a well-edited package of information around contemporary social policy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Condensed into three parts and presented in a systematic manner, this text guides the reader through a variety of social policy and social justice related issues. Each part carefully assists the reader to develop an understanding of social policy for social workers and allied professionals practising in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Part one, divided into six chapters, leads the reader through a general overview, and specifically social work related, social policy, law and ideology. Amongst other areas, this section includes a focus on Te Tiriti and the promotion of the wellbeing of Pasifika people.

Concentrating on specific social policy issues, the book continues, in part two, to lead the reader through the selected topics using specific examples from a variety of fields of practice. Cleverly pulling together a variety of social policy commentary, the editors employ diverse examples to evidence how these issues can be used and/or confronted in practice. The 10 chapters in this second section include discussion about policy regarding older people, Māori, refugees, policy affecting people with disabilities, about family violence, youth, genders and sexualities and the currently topical and controversial topic of child protection reform. This subject range is impressive in a relatively short text, each subject having been covered comprehensively in relation to current social policy. The chapter authors manage to raise many questions, offer some ideas around solutions and consistently manage to place social work at the centre of potential positive progression.

Part three considers, over six chapters, some particular examples of social policy in action. These chapters report evidence of practitioners engaging with social policy to enable positive change. Examples of this include advocacy services, stigma associated with

particular social situations, and housing issues for people who may be considered hard to house (in this text, specifically considering released women prisoners).

This book covers a range of social justice issues in an articulate and detailed manner. There are mainly academic authors in this book, and greater practitioner representation may well have offered a different perspective but would not necessarily have improved the excellent quality of content. The text enables the reader to develop a general grasp of social policy issues and the associated consequences of those policies, in particular how policy can be so adept at discriminating against marginalised groups in Aotearoa New Zealand. This focus naturally primes the book to be an excellent teaching aid for social work educators, offering the potential to encourage students to develop conversation and analysis on contemporary social policy; offering students the opportunity to critique policy in direct relation to social work practice. This is a quality reference book for students, front-line practitioners, educators and academics alike and will be a welcome addition to the libraries of both individual practitioners and tertiary institutions.

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