



Did Anyone Listen?

Comments from the Welfare Working Group Forum

Kay Brereton the Advocacy Coordinator at the Wellington People's Centre attended the recent Welfare Working Group Forum at Victoria University, and made the following observations.

"People with an interest in the New Zealand Welfare System came to Wellington from all over the country and Australia to contribute their knowledge and experience to inform the Welfare Working Group's decision making process.

It was very disappointing to see that what Paula Bennett and Paula Rebstock said to the media was vastly different to what they said to the assembled delegates, this gave many of us cause for concern as to whether the forum was listening or just window dressing consultation.

I feel that a huge opportunity was missed as there were many interesting and capable people doing grass roots work with their communities. The forum didn't give these people a formal opportunity to share their strategies for successful community change. Unfortunately many of these people experienced being talked to, rather than talked with.

The Wellington People's Centre will continue to engage with the Working Group members and try to help them make realistic recommendations to the Minister which enshrine and enhance our Welfare system, which we learnt is performing fairly well by international standards."

For further comment contact Kay Brereton brs@wpc.net.nz