



Project Esther

Welcome to our Mid-Winter newsletter

Welcome to our mid-winter newsletter. Recently our mahi/work is aligning with the news headlines. One cold frosty morning, a woman carrying her belongings was waiting for us, having been told we might have accommodation. She had slept in a shed overnight. Sadly, she was in her 60's.

We could not accommodate her, only offer her our bathroom, breakfast and a ride to her next place of inquiry. Women facing challenges are the real and tangible consumers of homelessness, poverty rates, disability, family violence, addiction journeys, and of course most of these scenarios involve children.

What news headlines are telling us is all true on the coalface.

The problems are significant, but so too is the compassion, generosity, and willingness of many people to help make a positive difference. Not enough though, to prevent or eliminate the scale of suffering. We do need more housing which women can afford. We do need domestic violence to stop, we do need mercy in the systems which allocate benefits, we do need cheaper power, petrol, food, accommodation, and period products. We do need our health system to manage the reality of inaccessibility and affordability.



El Esfuerzo (The Effort) [AI-generated image].
(2025, August). Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com>

Our newsletter highlights the need and encouragement to give or share, whether it is a packet of tampons, a blanket, or help with our funding. Here are some ways kind people and organisations have generously reached out to support us or to empower others...

Daphne

Personal care products are in demand from our local schools, especially period products for girls and young women whose families do not have the means to provide them. Nurse Maude has a School Based Nurse Team working locally, who regularly access our stores of deodorant, shampoo, soap, toothbrushes etc. to pass on to high school students.



Through a connection made on Instagram, Knewe Label, a New Zealand designed clothing brand, kindly donated four huge boxes of beautiful clothing and high-quality knitwear.

Harcourts Papanui made a generous financial contribution that enabled us to purchase over 1000 packs of sanitary products to distribute within our community.



Thanks to the Christchurch Aunties, we can pass on regifted handbags filled with essential personal care items for women needing to move quickly to safety. These are funded by the Love Grace charity, an organisation that seeks to provide education and raise awareness of male violence towards women.

Custodial Sentence Reform

Projected increases to New Zealand's female prison population have been in the news recently. The Ministry of Justice project a dramatic gender shift in NZ prisons with a 63% increase in women being incarcerated over the next decade. They attribute this to recent policy changes, particularly the proposed Crimes Amendment Act, which seeks to introduce a custodial sentence (max. 2 years) for theft (which is by definition a non-violent act) under \$2000 if carried out in an 'offensive, threatening, insulting or disorderly manner'. Antje Deckert (Associate Professor of Criminology at AUT) points out that this amendment will affect not only the incarcerated women but also a generation of girls, with statistics showing a 43% increase in risk of sexual assault for girls living without their mothers.

Matariki Crafts

Project Esther sends individual card making packs to Christchurch Women's Prison three times a year. Packs include blank cards, envelopes, pictures and paper shapes. Each piece in the pack is designed, prepared and collated so the wāhine can create cards to send to their whānau. Most recently we sent 210 Matariki themed packs. We work with the prison chaplain for this to happen.



<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/crime-and-justice/598080/number-of-female-prisoners-expected-to-surge-by-63-percent-over-next-decade>

<https://theconversation.com/proposed-tougher-penalties-for-theft-would-punish-mostly-women-and-harm-their-daughters-285357>

Speaking up for disabled women, carers and whānau

Project Esther Trust recently made a submission on the proposed Disability Support Services Bill, drawing on what we see through our work alongside women facing adversity and complex challenges. We wanted to ensure the voices of disabled women, caregivers, and whānau were represented.

Many of the women we support are already managing significant caring responsibilities alongside financial pressure, housing insecurity, health challenges, employment demands, or recovery from family violence. We are concerned that the proposed changes could place even greater responsibility on disabled people, carers, and families who are already stretched.

Our submission emphasised the need for a disability support system that values care, protects dignity, and enables people to participate fully in their communities. We also urged that any future changes be developed through meaningful consultation with disabled people, carers, and disability organisations.

Project Esther Trust will continue to advocate for practical, equitable support that upholds the dignity and wellbeing of women and whānau.

Thanks for reading our mid-winter newsletter, and for seeing us as we mahi in mostly invisible ways.

Let's all be mindful, caring and kind to precious wahine navigating adversity and challenges.

From the team at

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