

Charitable Aid

Charitable Aid was a system established by the Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act of 1885 to regulate and manage the distribution of food rations, medicine and hospital out-patient medical treatment to the destitute, as well as the admission of the destitute sick, incurable, elderly and orphaned or neglected children, to various charitable institutions.

The Origins of Charitable Aid in New Zealand

The Destitute Persons Relief Ordinance of 1846 was one of the first measures introduced by the General Government to assist the destitute poor. Under this Act people were made liable to support their destitute relatives and maintenance could be claimed from those deserting their wives and children.

Soup kitchens and orders for rations were also available to those requiring sustenance. Religious organisations usually recommended persons for rations, which were obtained from certain businesses who supplied such goods under government contract. This system was open to abuse and various investigations resulted in a report in 1862 that recommended the establishment of homes for the aged and infirm rather than placing them in hospital wards, and tighter control of ration distribution.

In 1867 the Auckland Provincial Council established a Fund for the Relief of the Sick and Destitute and appointed a Relieving Officer to investigate the circumstances of those seeking relief. The Provincial Council also opened a new lunatic asylum outside of Auckland City in 1867, which meant that the original asylum in the hospital grounds could be used to provide a refuge for a number of elderly people. In 1868 a general tax was imposed under the Sick and Destitute Act of 1868 to provide sufficient revenue.

From 1876 to 1885 the General Government administered aid to the destitute poor. The Hospital and Charitable Aid Institutions Act of 1885 rationalised the administration of charitable aid. The legislation placed the Auckland Sick and Destitute Fund under the management of the Auckland Hospital and Charitable Aid Board. Every designated district in the country had a Hospital and Charitable Aid Board which had control over designated institutions in their district and funds that they could distribute to those in need. These boards could also make by-laws, impose penalties, collect and invest funds, erect buildings and appoint officers (such as Relieving Officers, Matrons etc).

Some Explanations of terminology used in the Administration of Charitable Aid

Relative

Relatives considered liable to contribute to the support of a destitute person who was applying for charitable aid were defined as the father, mother, stepfather, stepmother, grandfather, grandmother, children (but not stepchildren) and brothers of the applicant. These relatives were required to contribute a reasonable sum of money, according to their means, towards those relatives receiving relief or being maintained in an institution. These liable relatives could be forced to pay and prosecuted through the courts for non-payment.

Destitute Persons

A destitute person was anyone who was unable to support themselves by their own means or labour.

Maintain

To maintain a person meant to provide them with food, clothing, education or training.

Outdoor Relief

Outdoor Relief was the most common form of relief provided, and usually took the form of food rations, clothing or blankets. The food rations were usually of two classes, grocery rations (such as tea, sugar

etc) and meat and bread rations. Occasionally transport costs would be paid to relocate individuals or families, or various bills or expenses paid (such as hospital fees or burial expenses).

Indoor Relief

Indoor Relief was provided by admission to various existing institutions which became subject to the 1885 Hospital and Charitable Institutions Act and others incorporated after 1885. Those institutions and charitable organisations that provided refuges or assistance in the northern region included Auckland Coromandel and Thames Hospitals, Auckland Old Men's and Women's Homes (later the Costley Home), Hauraki Ladies' Benevolent Society and Thames Orphanage.

Eligible for Relief

People who were considered eligible for relief under the Act were:

- Old people without family or friends, and through no fault of their own without means of support.
- Widows with young children.
- Cases of temporary unemployment or sickness.
- All those in poverty as a result of the misconduct of the breadwinner, eg imprisonment, drunkenness, desertion.
- Orphaned and destitute children.

Though all cases were investigated and treated on their merits.

Information that can be found in a Charitable Aid Application Register

Charitable Aid Application registers are useful for genealogical and social research - they give information about the people applying for relief, their circumstances and any relatives.

An Application Register usually contains the following information:

- Date of application
- An application number (case number)
- Full name of applicant
- The names of all dependants (spouse/children/elderly relatives etc)
- Age of applicant and all dependants
- Address of applicant
- Status (single, married, widowed)
- Occupation
- How long the applicant has lived in the colony
- How long the applicant has lived in the district
- Cause of application (deserted, orphaned, sick, imprisoned, want of work etc.)
- The names of relatives liable to contribute towards the support of the applicant, their relationship to the applicant (father, wife, son etc) their place of work, earnings, sometimes their circumstances.
- Location - suburb, town, or country of residence.
- Sometimes religion

Information that can be found in Charitable Aid / Relief Committee / Social Welfare Committee Minute Books

Information collected varies over the years. Examples of the type of information that may be found are:

- Date of meeting
- Committee members present
- Applicant's name
- Usually the applicant's registration (case) number
- Sometimes suburb or area lived in
- Rations approved (general or specific)

- Portion or quantity of rations
- Period of time covered (for one month, six months)
- Whether applicant was present or absent from meeting
- If application was declined / deferred / rations reduced or stopped
- Sometimes notes (e.g. - send to sanatorium, Costley Home, admit to maternity hospital, send to Grey Street Mission, pay fare to Cambridge, proceed against father etc).

Related records

Other related records that may contain information on individuals or families receiving Charitable Aid include:

- Hospital Board Minute Books (early volumes)
- Costley Home Minute Books
- Registers of inmates of District Homes
- Application for Relief case files (8 files only)
- Benevolent Society Ledgers

Access

Hospital Board records are restricted for 70 years. Researchers wanting access to these records less than 70 years old must apply for access permission from the relevant Health Board or Hospital. Details of where to apply can be found in the relevant series information on [ARCHWAY](#)

Indexes

Card indexes have been created by surname for some of these records. The indexes provide the researcher with the archives reference and page or register number. These references can be used to request the item on [ARCHWAY](#) (our online catalogue), and the page or register number to find the individual entry. Please check for reference updates above the index cabinets. The indexed series or parts of series are noted below.

Record series held in Auckland Regional Office

15245	Auckland Register of Applications for Relief 1888-1907	indexed
15246	Auckland Register of Application for Relief - A sequence 1908-1929	indexed
15247	Auckland Register of Application for Relief - B sequence 1929-1931	indexed
15248	Auckland Register of Application for Relief - C sequence 1931-1938	indexed
15235	Auckland Applications for Relief - A sequence 1909-1909 [1 file only listed by name]	
15326	Auckland Applications for Relief - C sequence 1933-1939 [7 files only listed by name]	
13034	Auckland Charitable Aid / Relief Committee/ Social Welfare Committee Minute Books 1885-1988, 1903-1975	indexed 1927-1931
15251	Costley Home Minute Books 1890-1933	indexed 1890-1921
14073	Register of Inmates the District Home Tararu, Thames 1906-1921	indexed
20217	Thames and Coromandel United Charitable Aid Register 1908	indexed

- [14066](#) Minutes of the General purposes Committee of the Thames and Coromandel United Charitable Aid Board 1900-1910
- [20218](#) Thames and Coromandel United Charitable Aid Board Cash Books 1904-1910
- [20214](#) Hauraki Ladies Benevolent Society Accounts 1906-1913
- [14331](#) Waihi Charitable Aid Record Book – Relief Given 1926-1935

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