

**#WE ARE  
BENEFICIARIES**

# Preserving the 'We are Beneficiaries' Project

National Library of New Zealand  
Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa



# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES



"I TALKED ABOUT HOW I LIED TO WINZ  
23 YEARS AGO WHEN I WAS A SINGLE  
MUM WITH A LITTLE BABY. I TALKED  
ABOUT WHAT BENEFICIARY LIFE IS  
REALLY LIKE SO WE COULD CHOOSE TO  
MAKE IT BETTER. I WAS NAMED A  
CRIMINAL, A CHEAT, A THIEF, A  
BLUDGER, A 'SELF CONFESSED BENEFIT  
FRAUDSTER.' SO BE IT. THERE ARE  
THE JUDGEMENTAL AND THE JUDGED. I  
STAND WITH THE JUDGED."

- Metiria Turei



**#WE ARE BENEFICIARIES**

Tweets  
**555**

Following  
**2,375**

Followers  
**2,238**

Likes  
**437**

Following



## WeAreBeneficiaries

@WeBeneficiaries Follows you

We're a group of artists and beneficiaries demanding a more compassionate social welfare system in NZ. Read our report here: [bit.do/WABreport](http://bit.do/WABreport)

New Zealand

[facebook.com/WeAreBeneficia...](https://facebook.com/WeAreBeneficia...)

Joined August 2017

Tweet to

Message

Tweets

Tweets & replies

Media

Pinned Tweet



**WeAreBeneficiaries** @WeBeneficiaries · 28 Feb 2018

Share your story - message us 3-5 sentences about:

- Your time In the welfare system, or
- What you wish the welfare system was like, or
- How you've been treated as a beneficiary

## SHARE YOUR STORY

MESSAGE US 3-5 SENTENCES ABOUT:

- YOUR TIME IN THE WELFARE SYSTEM, OR



## Our Story

 WE ARE BENEFICIARIES · WEDNESDAY, 14 FEBRUARY 2018

We are a group of artists continuing the conversation Metiria Turei MP started - demanding a more compassionate social welfare system.

We asked artists who have been on a benefit in NZ (DPB, sickness, invalids, jobseeker, whatever) to draw a picture of themselves, and write a couple of sentences next to it about:

- Their time on the welfare system, or
- What they wish the welfare system was like, or
- How they've been treated as a beneficiary

We're invested in keeping race and class at the forefront, but also recognise that it's a pretty vulnerable thing to do - and given what happened to Metiria in the last few weeks, these conversations can have pretty dire effects when we do share - particularly for people of colour and indigenous people.

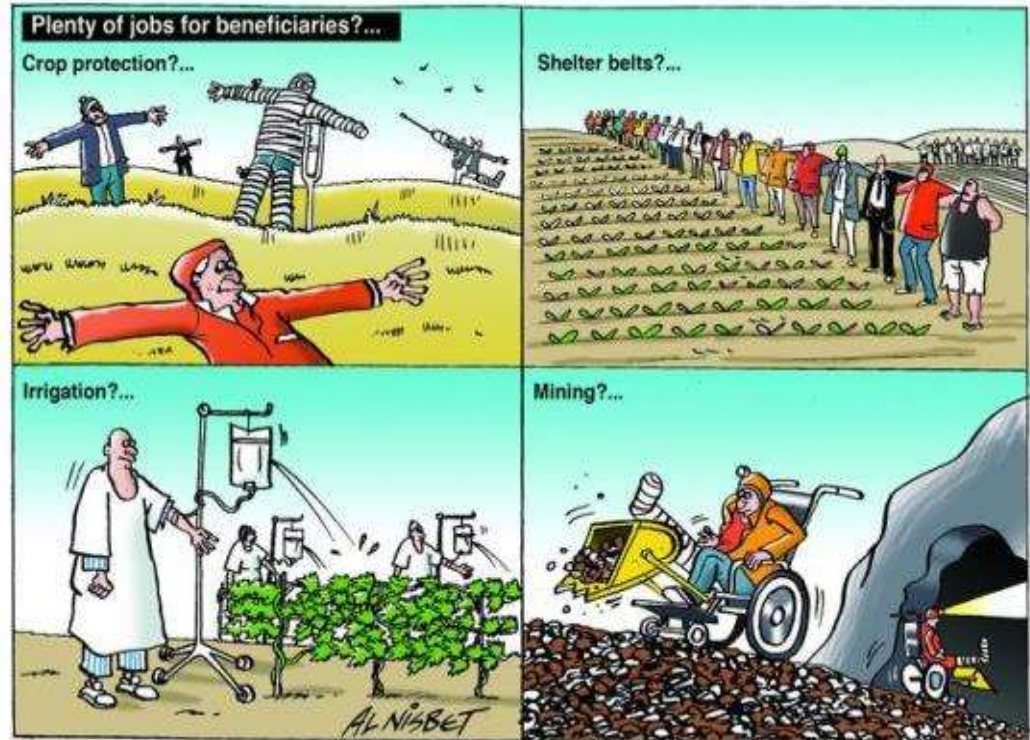
If you wanna be a contributor - as an artist who has been or is on a benefit, or as a person who wants to share a few sentences about their experience and have one of our artists draw you, then please send us a message.

[#wearebeneficiaries](#)





29 May 2013. DCDL-0025131



28 March 2010. DCDL-0020375

04 August 2009. DCDL-0011958



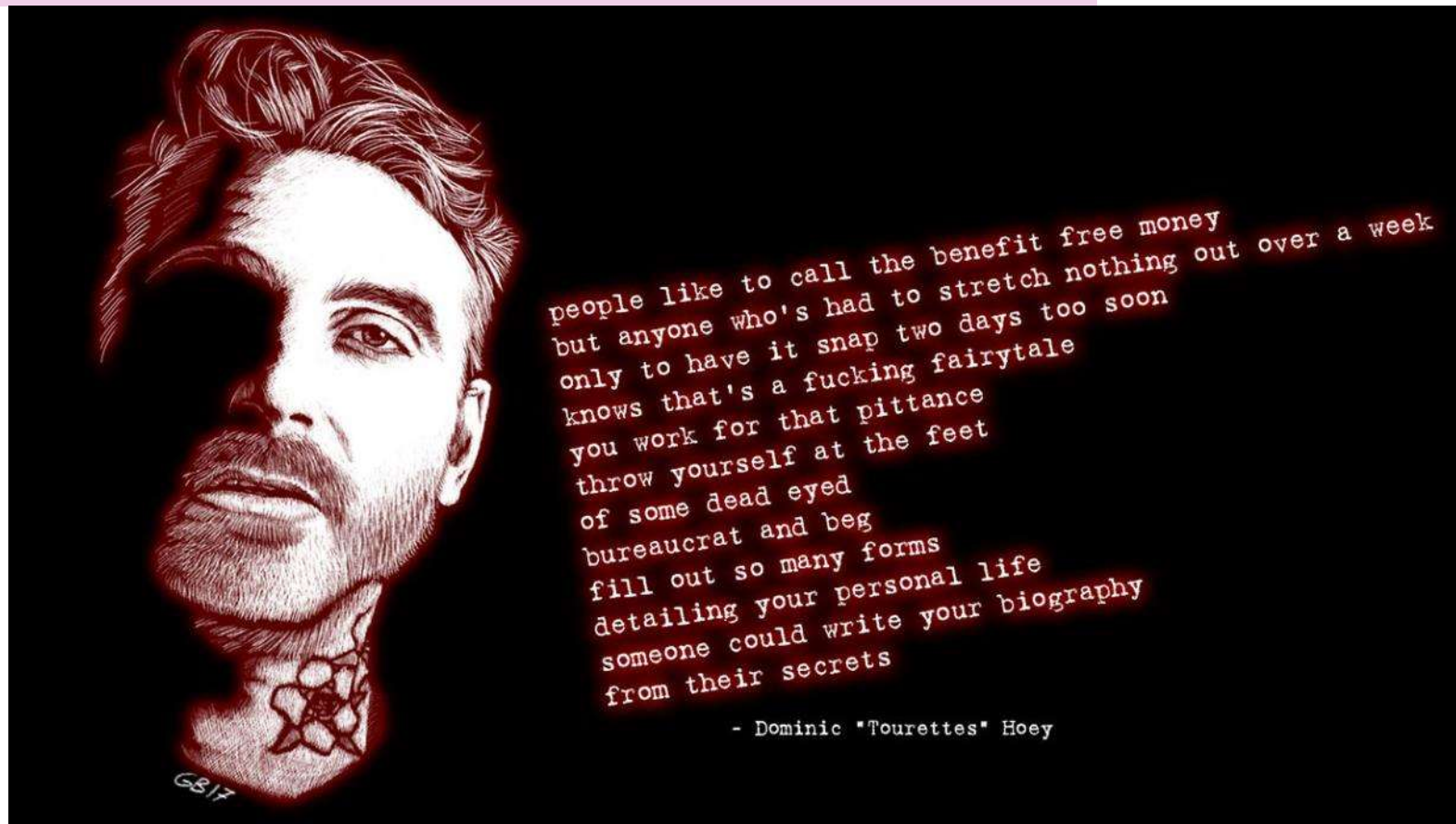
Examples of daily newspaper cartoons, from the New Zealand Cartoon Archive

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES



EVERY TIME I CAME OUT OF WINZ  
I FELT SHITTER THAN WHEN I WENT IN.  
AND I FELT REALLY SHIT GOING IN.  
IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A SAFETY NET  
WHEN THINGS GET DIRE, BUT INSTEAD  
OF A COMPASSIONATE SYSTEM IT'S A  
DEHUMANISING ONE. BECAUSE  
THEY DON'T WANT YOU TO  
WANT TO COME BACK.  
- SAM.

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES



people like to call the benefit free money  
but anyone who's had to stretch nothing out over a week  
only to have it snap two days too soon  
knows that's a fucking fairytale  
you work for that pittance  
throw yourself at the feet  
of some dead eyed  
bureaucrat and beg  
fill out so many forms  
detailing your personal life  
someone could write your biography  
from their secrets

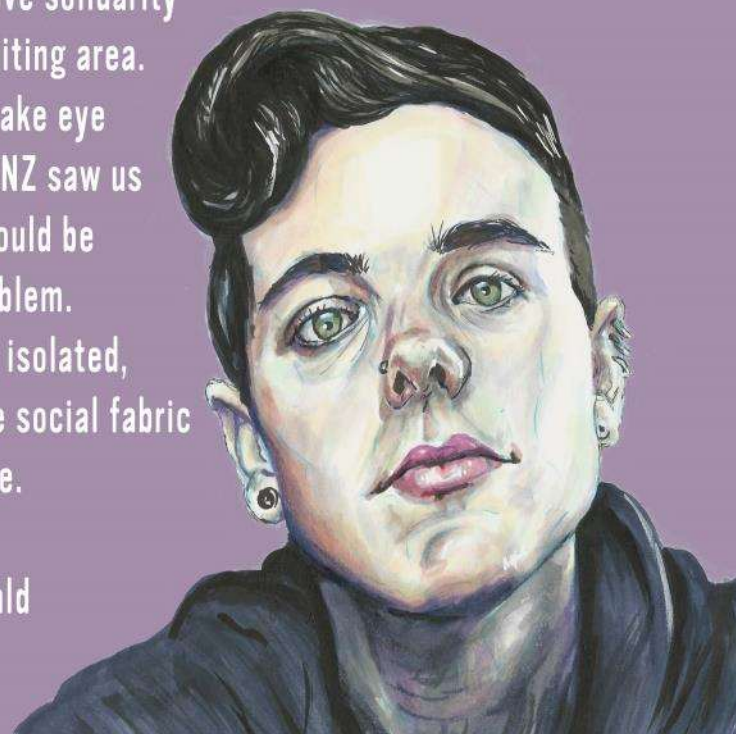
- Dominic "Tourettes" Hoey

GB17

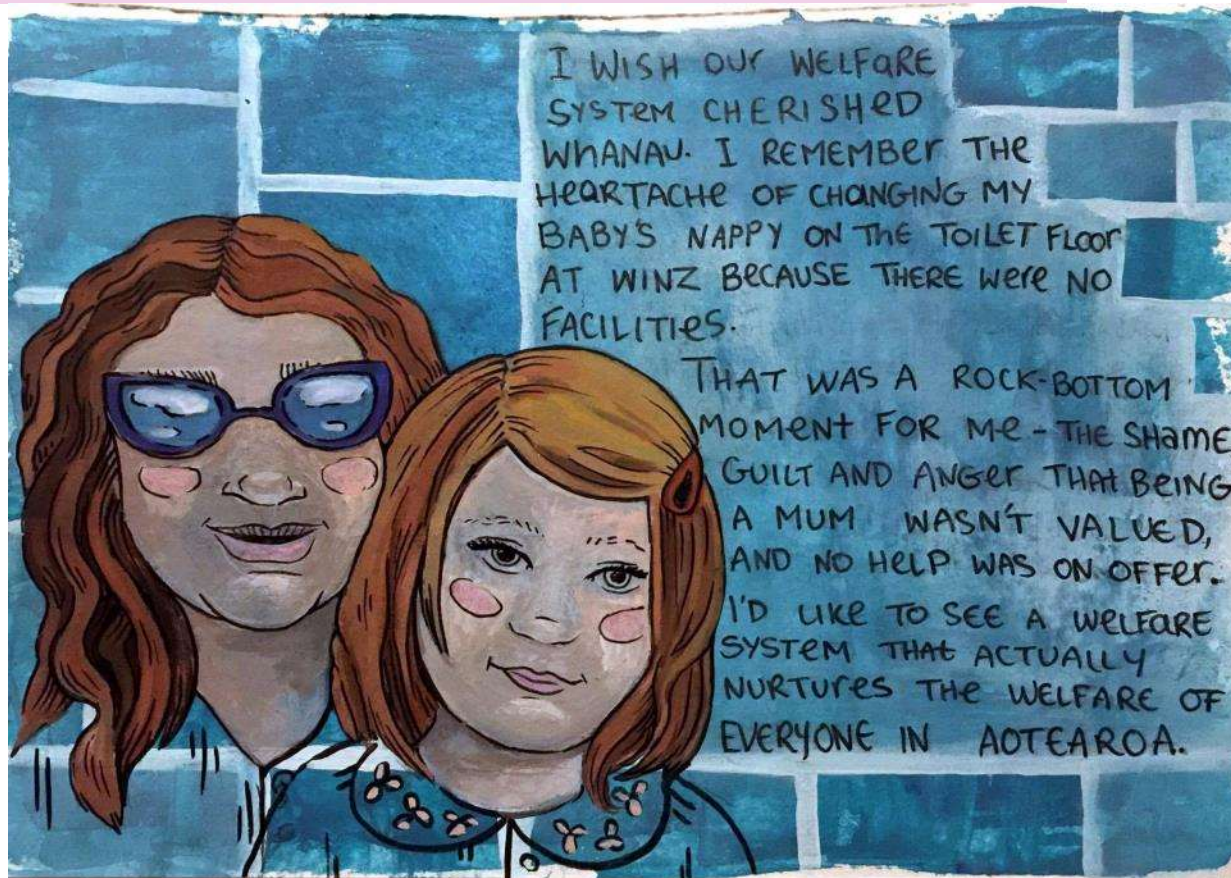
# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES

"I remember sitting in the WINZ office feeling so anxious and ashamed and wanting to have solidarity with the other people in the waiting area. But we were all too afraid to make eye contact or anything - like if WINZ saw us being nice to each other, we would be more of a threat, more of a problem. Being managed into miserable, isolated, individual units. It destroys the social fabric that we actually need to survive. Fuck that."

- Mx. Joey Macdonald



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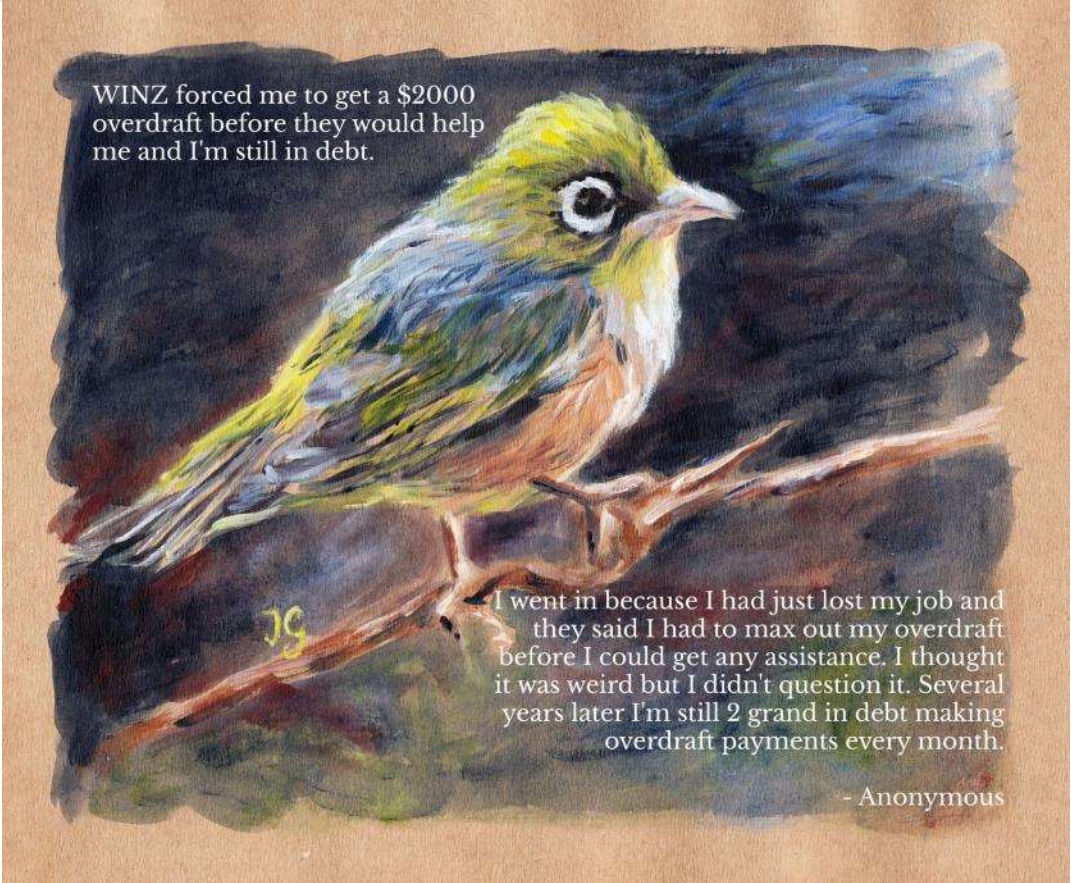


# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES



THEY CUT OFF  
MY DISABILITY  
BENEFIT BECAUSE  
"PTSD ISN'T CURABLE  
SO THERE'S NO POINT  
IN FUNDING THERAPY  
THAT WON'T FIX YOU"

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES



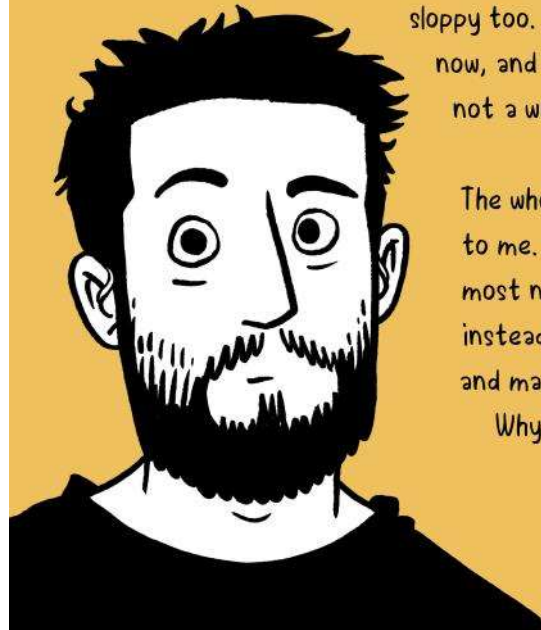
WINZ forced me to get a \$2000 overdraft before they would help me and I'm still in debt.

I went in because I had just lost my job and they said I had to max out my overdraft before I could get any assistance. I thought it was weird but I didn't question it. Several years later I'm still 2 grand in debt making overdraft payments every month.

- Anonymous

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I was on a benefit when I was trying to start my career. Any time I started to get work, I felt like I got punished. It felt soul crushing. The system was degrading and complicated, yet completely sloppy too. And it's even tougher now, and tougher again if you're not a white guy.



The whole thing seems backwards to me. We take the people who most need our support and instead we demoralise them and make life harder for them. Why? It makes no sense.

-TOBY

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES

"I want a welfare system that is incorporated into our own community, advocacy, and welfare organisations, so that it no longer exists as a gatekeeper to our ability to survive but as a service that supports & uplifts us and our communities. At the very least, it should no longer stigmatise, ignore, or force an unnecessary standard of proof on to our health, mental health, pronouns, children, types of relationships, or worth as human beings beyond our paid labour. I don't want to be terrified and disgusted before I even walk in the door."



# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES

"I was unemployed in the 90's. The first thing I remember about the WINZ offices was the sound of an old lady crying. She explained, while sobbing, that her late husband had done the banking and she didn't understand what she was being asked to provide. She was snapped at and sent on her way. All she needed was an ounce of respect and the person to tell her what to ask the bank teller for.

If a little old lady, trying to sort out her super was treated like this, dehumanised and humiliated, how would they treat me?

I complied meekly to everything they demanded, even when I knew they were wrong. I was terrified of what they would do if I didn't."

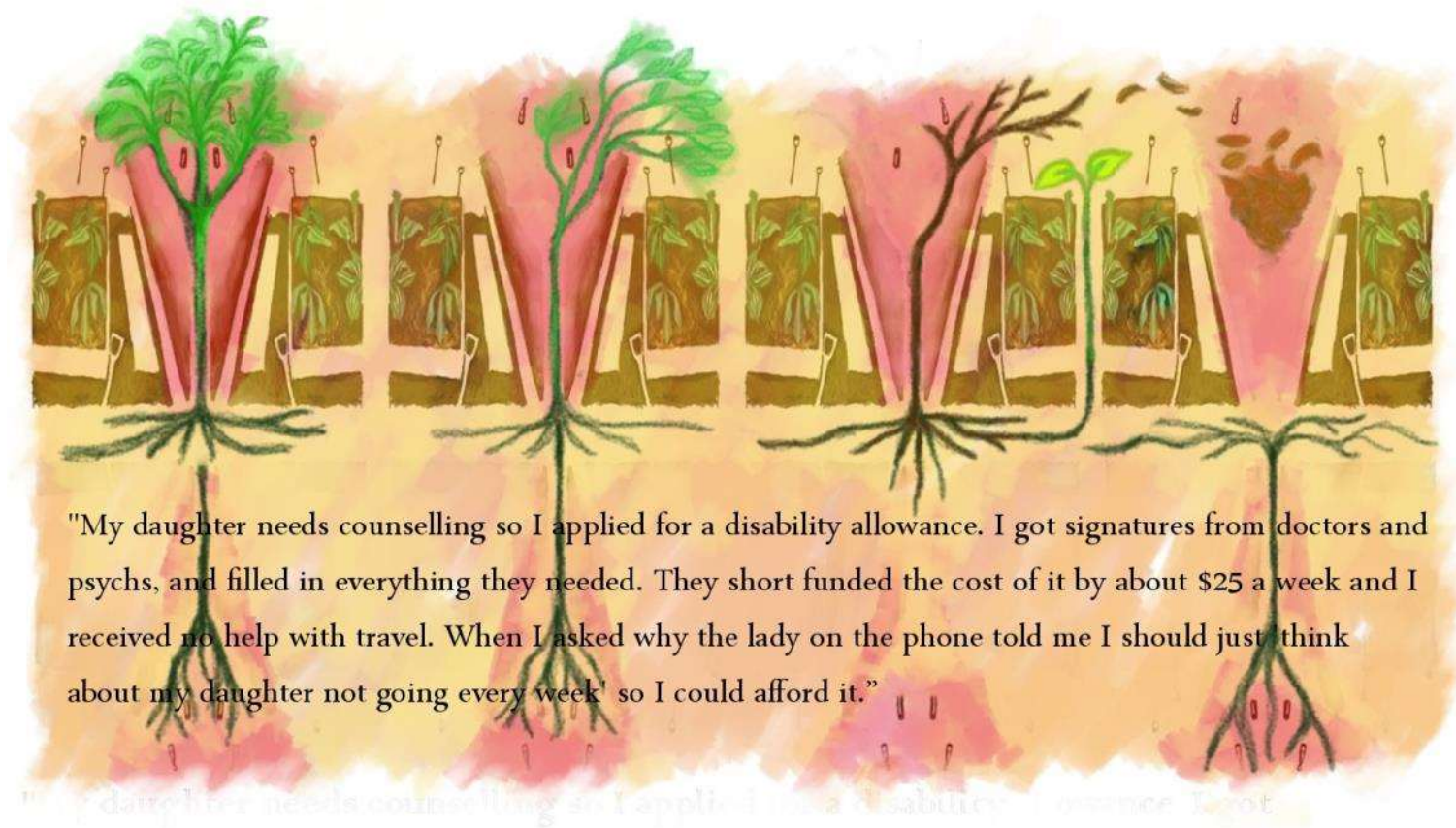
- GREVILLE



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"My daughter needs counselling so I applied for a disability allowance. I got signatures from doctors and psychs, and filled in everything they needed. They short funded the cost of it by about \$25 a week and I received no help with travel. When I asked why the lady on the phone told me I should just think about my daughter not going every week' so I could afford it."

"My daughter needs counselling so I applied for a disability allowance. I got

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES

I WANT TO SEE A WELFARE  
SYSTEM THAT TREATS  
PEOPLE AS PEOPLE, NOT  
JUST A FILE.

A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE  
ACTUALLY FEEL ABLE TO GET  
THE SUPPORT THEY NEED TO  
TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR LIFE.



AND A PLACE WHERE WE  
AREN'T REDUCED TO TEARS  
EVERY TIME WE HAVE TO  
EXPLAIN HOW WE ENDED UP  
SITTING IN THIS OFFICE."  
ANONYMOUS

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES



**"IF STANDING UP AGAINST A CRUEL  
SYSTEM THREATENS THE ESTABLISHMENT,  
THEN I WANT THE ESTABLISHMENT  
TO FEEL THREATENED.**

**LET'S TRULY PUT PEOPLE  
-ALL PEOPLE-  
AT THE CENTRE OF  
EVERYTHING WE DO"**

**- MARAMA DAVIDSON**

# #WE ARE BENEFICIARIES

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WeAreBeneficiaries @WeBeneficiaries · 7 Mar 2018

This International Women's Day we'd like to say a massive thank you to all the strong women who have stood up to create a more compassionate welfare system [#wearebeneficiaries](#) (Artist: Semira Davis)





**#WE ARE  
BENEFICIARIES**

**Special thanks to Sam Orchard,  
all of the artists, and everyone  
who shared their stories.**

For more information:

<https://www.facebook.com/WeAreBeneficiaries/>  
<https://twitter.com/webeneficiaries>  
<https://www.instagram.com/wearebeneficiaries>

<https://natlib.govt.nz/records/39712914>



**Te Tari Taiwhenua  
Internal Affairs**