

## **SWCDT21/17P – Ms Jacqueline Maree Wastney**

### **Charge**

On 23 June 2022 the Social Workers Complaints and Disciplinary Tribunal (the Tribunal) heard a charge laid by a Professional Conduct Committee (PCC), against Ms Jacqueline Maree Wastney, registered social worker of Christchurch (the social worker). A penalty hearing was held by audio-visual link on Monday 15 August 2022.

The charge alleged that:

1. (a) The social worker engaged in conduct which breached the Social Workers' Registration Board's Code of Conduct and/or conduct which brought, or was likely to bring discredit to the social work profession; alternatively  
(b) Conduct unbecoming a social worker reflecting adversely on her fitness to practise.
2. In particular, while employed by VisionWest Community Trust (VisionWest):
  - (a) Between around October 2017 and November 2018, the social worker dishonestly took food parcels obtained from the 0800 Hungry Service which were intended for clients of VisionWest; and/or
  - (b) In or around October 2018, the social worker dishonestly took 16 supermarket vouchers worth a total of \$320 which were intended for clients of VisionWest.
3. The nature of the Social Worker's conduct as set out above at paragraphs 2(a) and /or (b) reflects adversely on her fitness to practise as a social worker;
4. By engaging in the above conduct, the social worker breached any or all of the Principles 1, 6, 9 and/or 10 of the Code, and in doing so, she engaged in conduct that has brought, or was likely to bring discredit to the social work profession.

### **Background**

The social worker registered with the Board on 11 September 2017. At the time of the conduct reviewed by the Tribunal she was a social worker employed by VisionWest Community Trust. She began working there in 2017. VisionWest is a community services provider operating in several regions throughout New Zealand. Its focus is on housing and homelessness. As part of this the Trust employs social workers to work with whānau to provide community housing services. Part of the social worker's role is to assist clients by obtaining grants or food parcels from other organisations. The social worker worked with vulnerable tenants predominately Housing New Zealand tenants who were having difficulty as tenants, and in transitional housing, supporting people who were struggling to find accommodation.

0800 Hungry Ministries (0800 Hungry) is a charitable trust that provides a food parcel service in Christchurch. VisionWest would arrange to collect food parcels from 0800 Hungry on behalf of their clients.

The social worker denied dishonestly obtaining the 0800 Hungry food parcels. Her position was that she provided the food parcels obtained to those in need, albeit to individuals who were not clients of VisionWest. She acknowledged that she failed to follow the required processes as to paperwork and the 0800 Hungry procedures. An audit of the delivery forms submitted by the social worker discovered multiple discrepancies including changes in the names and ages of clients and their children and issues with the listed addresses.

Fast Connect Ltd is a utilities connection company that assist people moving houses by arranging for the connection of utilities on the customer's behalf. Fast Connect worked with VisionWest to help its clients get their utilities connected when they moved into transitional housing. Fast Connect also provided VisionWest with \$20 vouchers, including in the form of supermarket vouchers, in exchange for referrals for VisionWest's clients. The social worker was the key liaison between VisionWest's Christchurch office and Fast Connect. On or about 12 October 2018, the social worker received 16, \$20 PAK'nSAVE vouchers. She was to hold on to them until a decision had been made as to which clients were to receive the vouchers. Between 12 and 20 October 2018 the vouchers were spent in three different Christchurch Central PAK'nSAVE stores. The social worker denied she had spent the vouchers.

On 13 November 2018 the social worker provided 16 replacement supermarket vouchers, each loaded with \$20 from PAK'nSAVE to VisionWest as if they were the original supermarket vouchers.

## **Finding**

The Tribunal found particular 2(a), established. While not part of the charge, the Tribunal was not satisfied there was sufficient evidential basis that the social worker personally gained or benefitted from her actions.

The Tribunal rejected the social worker's account as to what happened to the food vouchers and was satisfied that particular 2(b), was proved.

The Tribunal was satisfied that the social worker's conduct breached Principles 1, 6, 9 and 10 of the Code of Conduct.

The charge of professional misconduct was established.

## **Penalty**

The Tribunal ordered that the social worker:

- Be censured;
- Have conditions placed on her practice for up to two years.
- Pay costs totalling \$20,220 in contribution to the hearing.

The Tribunal directed publication of this decision and a summary.