

## Steps in Social Action

I have written up the story of my action against the Whakatane District Council when they moved to sell their pensioner housing. *Template for Social Action* is available from the Waiapu Anglican Social Services Trust Board, P. O. Box 227, Napier. This gives far more detail than this document. I can be contacted at either (07) 308-5809, 021 358939 or P.O. Box 164, Whakatane. My action is as a priest but I trust much of what I have to say would apply to a lay person wishing to take action about an issue in their community.

1. Firstly you need to identify an issue – this may come from discussion with others, a newspaper article or your own observation.
2. Then you need to do further research to check information or be better informed.
3. Discuss your concern with others. Part of your task now is to determine what action is appropriate given the situation and your understanding of the Gospel.
4. Reflecting on scripture, this was vital and part of “doing theology in context.” Much seemed to come to me in the weekly Biblical reading for the liturgy.
5. Inform your parish or leadership. In discussion with others, it appears that I did the right thing by informing the Parish Council of my intention, without necessarily requiring them to approve. I also spoke at church as well as have information on our notice board. I kept a thermometer of numbers who had signed the petition.
6. When I took action I invited people to do things with me and made it clear that they had an option. Don't give people a guilt trip.
7. My actions involved reporting to the media, writing letters to the paper. I also was involved in a protest march. There is a sample of my petition and the background paper which proved invaluable. Further tips on doing this are contained in *Template for Social Action*. We also conducted workshops for making submissions to Council at church. A pro forma document is also included, as you may wish to get a mass submission.
8. Dealing with depression, failure or people stopping supporting you. You will feel on your own at times or that it might not succeed. I could identify with Elijah after his battle with the Prophets of Baal.
9. Do it!

I am happy to talk to anyone who wishes me to and I think my paper will give you some pointers that cannot be contained in a brief summary. I have resisted calling this a template, because more than the other processes described in this manual your action will be determined by the issue, your community, the ethos of the body you may be dealing with.

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