**‘Informing the 2019 Review – 133 questions that New Zealand needs answered’**

**The 2019 Review’s timid terms of reference**

**25 June 2019**

Michael Chamberlain and Michael Littlewood have published what they suggest should be the basis for the review of retirement income policies that New Zealand needs in 2019. Their report is called *Informing the 2019 Review – 133 questions that New Zealand needs answered* and is available online at [www.alt-Review.com](http://www.alt-review.com/).

This press release comments on the government’s terms of reference for the Retirement Commissioner’s 2019 Review of Retirement Income Policies (accessible [here](https://www.cffc.org.nz/reviews-and-reports/retirement-income-policy-review/)). *Informing the 2019 Review* suggests that, unfortunately, the 2019 Review looks likely to follow the pattern set in the preceding six similar reviews.

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**Summary:** In setting the *Terms of Reference for the 2019 Review of Retirement Income Policies*, the government has ensured New Zealand will have a disappointing 2019 Review, to add to the previous six similar reviews. Unless the process changes, the 2022 Review will be just as disappointing. It’s time to review the Reviews.

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The government has announced the terms of reference for the 2019 Review of Retirement Income Policies, as required under the New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 2001. Michael Chamberlain and Michael Littlewood’s report *Informing the 2019 Review – 133 questions that New Zealand needs answered* suggests that this year’s Review will do no better than the previous six similar reviews, if its Terms of Reference are any guide.

They describe the Terms of Reference as cast in the “same timid mould as its 2016 equivalent.”

Instead, Chamberlain and Littlewood’s report describes what they suggest the Review should actually be looking at. They examine 21 different aspects of New Zealand’s retirement framework from the economy to KiwiSaver; from the New Zealand Superannuation Fund to longitudinal studies of households; from reforming the state pension to sorting out income tax and regulation as they affect retirement saving schemes. Each topic is followed by a list of questions that New Zealand needs to answer if the Retirement Commissioner’s triennial review has any chance of achieving its true objectives.

There are 133 important questions in all and none of them will be answered if the government’s Terms of Reference and past reports are any guide.

“Despite the six reviews since the present retirement policy review framework was established in 1993, very little has actually happened as a result. The present three-yearly review needs to change and the Retirement Commissioner’s roles should return to those described in the 1992 Task Force’s report.”

Chamberlain and Littlewood’s recommendations for this and future reviews include gathering better, deeper data on what New Zealand households are doing, allowing the Retirement Commissioner, with the government’s support, to set the Terms of Reference and making sure the office of the Retirement Commissioner is properly funded so that it can do the job that New Zealand needs done.

“New Zealand spends a net $12.3 billion on New Zealand Superannuation and another $800 million on KiwiSaver. Are taxpayers getting the best value for those large amounts of money? New Zealand Superannuation is probably one of the best Tier 1 schemes in the world but it undoubtedly can be made better. The Terms of Reference don’t allow the Retirement Commissioner to do the job that needs to be done in that regard.”

Chamberlain and Littlewood go further:

“Part of the national discussion that New Zealand now needs should be a review of the Retirement Commissioner’s role itself. The Retirement Commissioner should contribute to that discussion but cannot run it.”

Chamberlain and Littlewood suggest that such a review should have been part of the 2019 Terms of Reference. They say that doing the same thing every few years for the last 22 years hasn’t worked and New Zealand should not expect a different outcome in 2019.

“New Zealand deserves better.”

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