

## Poverty in Auckland: A historical review

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### Introduction

This historical review of poverty in Auckland covers the period of the early European settlers through to the 1970s. The 19th century was a time of poverty for many, with little charitable aid available. The classical liberal policies of that period left any charitable work to the churches. The liberals saw their role primarily as balancing the budget. While people's suffering might be seen as regrettable, it was not the role of government to intervene. When aid eventually became available through the hospital boards it was provided begrudgingly. An analysis of the applications for help to the hospital board in Auckland reveals the extent of poverty and suffering. Those most affected were women and children, and men of old age. The depression of 1870 to 1890 and the Great Depression of the 1930s saw malnutrition destroy many lives. The poor parts of Freemans Bay were particularly affected by extreme poverty. It was not until the introduction of the welfare state that abject poverty was controlled. In spite of these gains, the poorer parts of Auckland continued to be damaged by public policies such as the building of infrastructure (e.g., motorways) and the designation of parts of Freemans Bay for urban renewal. Since the neoliberal policies of government in the 1980s, poverty has again become a contemporary socioeconomic issue that governments are struggling to ameliorate.

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