

Media statement – embargoed until 12pm Tuesday 28 August

28 August 2012

We can do something about child poverty says Children's Commissioner

Proposed solutions to child poverty announced today have potential to pull thousands of kiwi children out of poverty says Children's Commissioner Dr Russell Wills.

In March the Commissioner set up an Expert Advisory Group to find solutions to child poverty. The group released an 'Issues and Options' paper with their findings today and are asking for feedback on the proposals.

"New Zealand is a caring country that values children. I don't believe anyone thinks that child poverty is OK.

"The suggested solutions put forward by my advisory group are bold, clever and have great potential for children and New Zealand. I have been heartened by the collaboration, passion and focus shown by the group, who are experts from diverse backgrounds and experience.

"While there has been plenty of good work in this area for many years, there has been very little co-ordination or strategy involved. That's not good enough. The solutions proposed today show we can do something about child poverty if we work together and have a clear strategy in place.

"The ideas are pragmatic, focused on making a difference for children and realistic about the economic climate we're in right now. Many of the proposed solutions are not about spending more money but about doing things differently or with a new focus.

"We all need to be part of this. There are solutions that we can implement as practitioners, community leaders, social agencies, government agencies, schools, members of society, parents and families.

"I would urge everyone with a concern about children to read the Issues and Options paper. Discuss the ideas with friends, workmates, family and your children and then tell the Expert Advisory Group what you think," the Commissioner says.

Feedback on the proposals can be made online, via Facebook or in person at seminars being held in the main centres. Children and young people will be specifically consulted with also.

"No New Zealander should accept that kids in this country are missing out. Child poverty can have an impact on a child's development, behaviour and physical health and can lead to problems as they grow into adults. And it costs the country too by increasing the resources and funding needed for services like healthcare.

“I am confident that the final report I give to the Government in December will lead to real change for children and New Zealand.”

Ends.

For more information or to request an interview with Dr Russell Wills, please contact Anna Santos on 027 696 5101 or a.santos@occ.org.nz

The full and summary Issues and Options papers are available at www.occ.org.nz

Please also visit this site for more information about the Expert Advisory Group and the consultation period.