



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's
Commissioner**

28 May 2013

A good start – but more to do

Children's Commissioner Dr Russell Wills has acknowledged the government's formal response to his Expert Advisory Group (EAG) report *Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand: Evidence for Action*.

"This response provides an overview of what steps the government is taking to tackle child poverty and child wellbeing. It is helpful to see the range of initiatives underway.

"Over its term the government has made many significant and helpful investments, including encouraging parents into work, on-time immunisation and reducing rheumatic fever. Much of this work was known to the EAG, and taken into account when it wrote its report and made its recommendations.

"The EAG identified other specific gaps and issues where existing policy and funding was not well targeted to effectively address the systemic issues underpinning child poverty in New Zealand, and called for a specific plan to address child poverty that includes targets we can monitor our progress against.

"The EAG also outlined a set of recommendations for the long-term that were more costly and a range of initiatives that cost little or nothing like adding a child expert as a member to the Work and Income Board. They also provided advice about how government could assess its current expenditure on children and then how the current level of investment could be reallocated to get the best outcome, like re-balancing the Family Tax Credit to provide greater benefit to younger children.

"I know that since the EAG report was released government has listened and has begun to respond. The response announced over the last few weeks and in the budget included designing and progressively implementing a warrant of fitness for rental properties, extending the rheumatic fever prevention programme, providing more funding into early

education, extra support for budget advisory service, and today's welcome announcement regarding providing food to our poorest children in low decile schools.

"I am proud of the impact the EAG report has had, and everyone who worked on the report should be too.

"I also know there is much more that must be done if we are going to make a sustained difference to children living in poverty. I will continue to work with businesses, philanthropists and government and community organisations to progress the EAG recommendations. In particular I will focus on supporting the development of guidelines for Food in Schools, micro-financing initiatives, the Vulnerable Children's Action Plan and child health services.

"What we need now is a specific plan, with targets and a way of monitoring our progress against those targets – perhaps a new Better Public Service target could be considered. Such a target would galvanise us all as we continue our work to address child poverty".

Ends

To read the Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand: Evidence in Action report go to: www.occ.org.nz

If you would like to interview the Children's Commissioner, Dr. Russell Wills, please contact:
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