

Budget 2015: for immediate release

Children’s Commissioner – “Budget a surprise but not a plan”



For further information or to request an interview, please contact Anna Santos on 027 696 5101 or a.santos@occ.org.nz

“I’m surprised” says Children’s Commissioner Dr Russell Wills following today’s Budget announcement. “I wasn’t expecting Government to increase incomes for the poorest families with children.”

“I’m pleased to see the Government has recognised that incomes for families with children matter, and has raised incomes for both beneficiary families and those working.

“A weekly rise in benefits of up to \$25 for families at the hardest end will be helpful for a family with one child, though less so for those with more children, as the increase is per family, rather than per child. It’s also a pity these children have to wait another year – a year is a long time in the life of a child.

“Let’s be clear, a one-off increase is not a plan for child poverty.

“For example, will the increase in incomes be linked to median incomes, as national superannuation is, or will the value be lost over time? Where is the plan to improve crowding and quality of housing for children?

“What we need is a comprehensive plan to reduce child poverty. A plan would set out exactly how we are going to do better for our children and how we’re going to get there. This Budget is not that.

“I welcome other aspects of the Budget that address the needs of vulnerable children.

“Professionals working with children with learning and behavioural problems will be relieved to see children with special needs receiving more attention. We are all worried about the rise in children with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and the effects of abuse and neglect on children’s learning and behaviour.

“I’m pleased to see the on-going investment in children at risk in particular. This addresses the pressing need to make the child protection system work for children and families.”

The Commissioner is available for media comment on the Budget. He is in Wellington and available for studio interviews if required.

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