



13 February 2013

Salvation Army's State of the Nation report is compelling

The Children's Commissioner welcomes the release of the Salvation Army's 6th Annual State of the Nation report: 'She'll Be Right'.

"I applaud Salvation Army for producing such a well-researched and realistic picture of what life is like for many families today in New Zealand, says Dr Wills.

"This research provides further compelling evidence that New Zealand does have real, abject child poverty and we must take action now if we want to make a difference for New Zealand children.

"It clearly shows how disappointingly little has been achieved over the past five years in reducing child poverty.

"The report captures the reality most paediatricians, social workers, emergency department staff and low-decile school teachers know too well - poor children living in cold, mouldy houses with not enough food. Children that get sick and don't learn because they missed breakfast.

"Child poverty is not necessarily a life sentence of ill health and poor job prospects. But many children who experience poverty will find life difficult and never get ahead. We know that the impact of child poverty reaches beyond the individual children missing out now – it costs us all.

"I am, however, heartened to see improvements across the justice sector including falling rates of offending, and declines in recidivism and the rising rates of enrolment for Māori children into early education centres.

"These improvements provide hope. They show there are always solutions – where we have made concerted effort there have been improvements.

"The Government understands child poverty is a problem in New Zealand and is already doing many helpful things, including encouraging parents into work, on-time immunisation, and reducing acute rheumatic fever and rates of assaults on children. But this effort must continue and be strengthened.

"There are solutions to Child Poverty and many cost nothing or very little. They include investing in housing, supporting the development of community hubs, a collaborative, nationwide food-in-schools programme in partnership with business and voluntary organisations, and the introduction of a public private micro-financing model to help low-income families avoid the need to borrow from 'loan sharks'.

"Good investments for children will give our country high, lifelong returns".

“The Government has an opportunity this year to implement recommendations from the EAG report as the Prime Minister said they would in his speech from the throne.

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: **Victoria Parsons 027 696 5101**