

More comprehensive plan needed for child well-being

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Children's Commissioner Dr Russell Wills says the Government's response to the Health Select Committee report will see better outcomes for children, but misses the big picture.

In November the Health Select Committee released a comprehensive report and recommendations on areas of action needed to improve the poor record on child health in New Zealand. Dr Wills said this report made some courageous recommendations that could have enormous potential to improve children's lives.

Yesterday the Government released its response to that report.

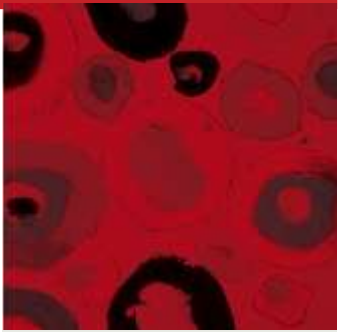
Dr Wills notes that many of things the Government is already doing, as outlined in the response, will go a long way in supporting better outcomes for children. This includes the Children's Action Plan, Better Public Service Targets for improving early childhood education, immunization and reducing rheumatic fever.

"I like that the Government is exploring new ways of getting better outcomes from existing investments, like social bonds" says Dr Wills, "but is that enough?"

"The Health Select Committee report provided an opportunity for us all to think about the big picture of child health and to look at the deeper, structural issues blocking progress. This included some big issues, like how we determine the right level of investment in children and how to reduce poverty to improve children's health outcomes.

"A great start would be to focus funding and services on the early years, where the evidence is clear we can have the greatest impact on children's outcomes.

"But most critically we need a clear plan for addressing the underlying causes of poor health in our children – including poverty. We need a plan that sets out what we want our future to look like for our children, what we're aiming for and how we're going to get there," says Dr Wills.



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