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Some gains for children in 20 years but slow progress

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Children's Commissioner Dr Russell Wills says some gains have been made for children in the 20 years since the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) was ratified but progress has been slow.

UNICEF NZ today released the report *Kids Missing Out* which examines the progress made since New Zealand ratified the Convention in 1993.

UNCROC is the world's largest human rights convention and has been signed by 192 countries around the world. It aims to protect the rights of children to have a happy, safe and fulfilling childhood. The Convention formalised the approach countries should take in improving outcomes for their children.

"Children are the most vulnerable in our society – they have very little power to change their lives for the better and they are not voters. We have a duty to protect them and give them the best chance in life," Dr Wills says.

"That is why recognising the UNCROC and constantly working towards better outcomes for our children is important.

"In the last 20 years we've seen some gains for children. Most notably recently has been the move to free health care for under 6s, the introduction of Working For Families and the repeal of section 59.

"However, I agree with the sentiments in the UNICEF report that progress is still too slow for our kids.

"The UNCROC should not be a document that sits on a dusty shelf and is only pulled out when it suits. We need to make sure that the principles of UNCROC are used early in the policy and legislation development process so they lead to real differences for children. It can't be an after-thought."

Ends.

**More about UNICEF NZ's report
on UNCROC can be found at:
www.unicef.org.nz**