



Media release

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Big, bold, permanent change needed to reduce child poverty

In partnership with the JR McKenzie Trust and University of Otago, Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft has today released the annual Child Poverty Monitor at childpoverty.org.nz which shows more bold and sustainable action is needed.

"Every child in Aotearoa New Zealand deserves to have the opportunity and support they need to live a good life.

"But some families can't keep up with the ever-increasing costs of daily living, like rent and putting food on the table.

"148,000 children are living in households doing it really tough. That's a city bigger than Dunedin, full of children whose families can't afford the basics like having enough to eat, sturdy shoes and warm clothes.

"We have 254,000 children living households with less than half the median income after paying for their housing*. To reach its child poverty reduction target of reducing this number by 130,000, the Government will need to make big, bold changes.

"I want to see family incomes dramatically raised by increasing benefits and making the minimum wage a living wage.

"And the Government needs to move much faster at increasing the supply of social housing – building, buying and repurposing - and working closely with community-based housing providers.

"We have the potential and the current resources to be a country where all children and young people thrive. We can do it. For those children I see, who are living in the most challenging circumstances, change can't come fast enough.

"I am pleased that we've started the journey with Child Poverty Reduction legislation, the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, and linking benefits to wages.

"Government has made increases in Working for Families, Best Start for Children, and winter energy payments. This is a fantastic start.

"But we need to see significant and permanent changes to unlock opportunities for those doing it hardest. One-offs aren't going to cut it anymore," says Commissioner Becroft.

ENDS

Media contact: Rachael Bowie, 027 696 5101 or r.bowie@occ.org.nz

Notes to editors:

All data come from the most recent and available official sources and are compiled by the Child Poverty Monitor 2019 Technical Report, available at childpoverty.org.nz. Some data lags mean the impacts of recent initiatives may not yet be seen.

* 254,000 children, or 23%, live in low-income households. These are households that have disposable equivalised income less than 50% of the national median income after housing costs.

About the CPM

The Child Poverty Monitor reports on child poverty in New Zealand and its impacts.

The Child Poverty Monitor is a partnership project between the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the JR McKenzie Trust and the New Zealand Child and Youth Epidemiology Service at the University of Otago.

In 2012, the Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty put forward 78 recommendations on a range of ways to address child poverty.

One of those recommendations identified, was the need to measure and report on child poverty rates annually. We believe this is a vital step in reducing child poverty in New Zealand and that is why this project was born.

The look, feel and focus of the Child Poverty Monitor has changed. We want to reflect a more aspirational approach to reducing child poverty, including the direction in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

The measures of child poverty and its impacts use a variety of official data sources in Aotearoa.