

Media Release 23 March 2010

Bennett dreams up a nightmare for disadvantaged children

Minister of Social Development Paula Bennett's telling sole parents "the dream is over" will be a nightmare for thousands of children, says Child Poverty Action Group. The Minister has signalled that 43,000 sole parents of school age children will be work tested and expected to take up part-time work.

CPAG has asked the Minister to outline what arrangements will be in place for parents with chronically sick or disabled children. The group has also asked for clarity on how sanctions will be applied so they do not affect the material wellbeing of already disadvantaged children.

Spokesperson Donna Wynd has welcomed the raising of earnings thresholds, but says this on its own will not reduce the hardship of many sole parents households. "Being able to earn an extra \$20 per week before tax will not alleviate child poverty, and it probably won't give anyone an incentive to work who isn't already," said Ms Wynd.

"We also have some real concerns about what happens if there are not 43,000 suitable part-time jobs conveniently located where parents live. Do parents have to take jobs that mean their children are unattended after school? And what if there simply are no jobs? What measures will be in place to ensure that parents are not unnecessarily sanctioned?"

The group is also worried about tightening up on invalids benefits. "The biggest barrier to the employment of the disabled is employer discrimination. If getting a benefit becomes harder, where do people go?"

This package looks like a repeat of the failed policies of the 1990s. They were bad for children then, and they will be worse for children now."

--Ends--

Kind Regards

Julie Timmins

www.cpag.org.nz

Ka Whangaia ka tupu, ka puawai

That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows.