



Public Health Association  
of New Zealand Inc.

## **PHA URGES GOVERNMENT TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT CHILD POVERTY**

**12 January 2006**

The Public Health Association (PHA) is calling on the Government to make tackling child poverty a priority for 2006.

"It is not acceptable that children in this 'wealthy' first-world country are suffering from third-world diseases," says Director Dr Gay Keating.

"The Government needs to get serious about this issue. Fixing a timeline for the reduction and elimination of child poverty and allocating substantial resources towards this goal would be a good start."

She says that lower-income families are under particular pressure at this time of year.

"Having just coped with all the extra expense of Christmas, families are now having to buy school uniforms and stationary, and pay school fees."

She says that lack of money is associated with poorer child health.

"Diseases from the age of Charles Dickens are still present in New Zealand because one in five children in New Zealand live in poverty. These illnesses include meningococcal disease, rheumatic fever, pneumonia, chronic lung infection, gastroenteritis, ear disease, dental disease and serious skin infection."

Dr Keating says that one immediate action the Government could take to improve the health of poorer children would be to extend the availability of the 'in-work payment'. The payment, which is part of the *Working for*

*Families* package, will be introduced in April, but will not go to parents who are on benefits.

"The *Working for Families* package will make a huge difference to the health of many children in low-income families. But any additional financial support needs to be extended to all children who need it, not just those with parents in work."

**For further information:**

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***The Public Health Association of New Zealand is a non-party political voluntary association, which provides a major forum for the exchange of information and stimulation of debate about public health in New Zealand.***