



Annual Report Year ended March 2015

*The guiding principle of CPAG is the
right of every child to security, food,
shelter, education and healthcare*

Child Poverty Action Group Incorporated
Charities Registration Number: CC25387
www.cpag.org.nz

CHiLD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP



Our vision

A New Zealand where no child has to live in poverty.

Our mission

CPAG strives to eliminate child poverty in Aotearoa New Zealand by better government policy. We work to provide evidence about the causes and effects of poverty on children and their families, and inform the public, policy makers, media and politicians of policy choices to reduce child poverty.

Our activities and decisions honour Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and other cultural perspectives.

CPAG is an independent, registered charity. We are funded entirely by grants from charitable trusts and donations from the public and do not apply for nor accept funding from the proceeds of the gambling industry.

What we do

Provide a strong, independent voice for New Zealand children

We are an independent organisation, working on behalf of all New Zealand children to advance policies to improve and enhance their wellbeing.

Harness expertise

We draw on world-class expertise from health, welfare, education, social services and economics to develop policy options and propose strategies that will improve opportunities for New Zealand families and communities.

Conduct original research

We conduct and commission rigorous research to understand better the underlying challenges related to child poverty, and use the findings to make recommendations and promote initiatives in the public domain.

Provide a spotlight on child poverty

Child poverty is a national issue that has been overlooked and dismissed for too long. We partner with other organisations to raise the profile of issues related to child poverty in New Zealand. CPAG's work has been widely taken up by other groups working on the issues.

Co-convenors' message

The 2014/15 year was a particularly busy and productive period for the Child Poverty Action Group. With a general election in September, CPAG worked to bring the plight of New Zealand's poorest citizens to wider public attention and to gain the support of politicians and policy makers for policy recommendations to eliminate child poverty.

CPAG released a series of papers on five key areas contributing to child well-being in New Zealand: health, early childhood care and education (ECCE), compulsory schooling, housing and family incomes, subsequently published as [Our children, our choice: priorities for policy](#). This major update of CPAG's earlier policy documents, *Left Behind* and *Left Further Behind*, was a significant exercise which drew on the expertise and experience of senior academics and practitioners throughout New Zealand and we are grateful for their authoritative voluntary contributions.

While child poverty is a moral and ethical issue it is also a political one, and CPAG has continued to argue that real and sustained change to our disgraceful child poverty rates must be underpinned by a cross-party political agreement.

The findings of CPAG's inaugural survey on New Zealanders' perceptions of child poverty bolstered this view, showing 80% of people, from across the political spectrum, agree child poverty is a significant problem in New Zealand. The survey highlighted that New Zealanders understand child poverty is a real and complex problem involving multiple causes and consequences, and that immediate action is needed. To an extent, this is encouraging - the argument has shifted from whether or not child poverty exists in a wealthy country like New Zealand, to the solutions, and this has been reflected in the National Government's stated commitment to addressing the problem.

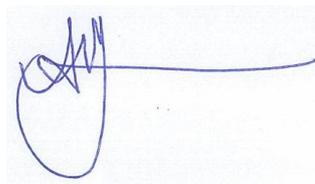
In the lead up to the election CPAG sought a firm indication from political leaders that they are committed to the steps needed to give all children a *fair go* so they can reach their potential. Child Poverty Action Group called on all parties to commit to a comprehensive plan to reduce or eliminate child poverty with targets and measures included. We gave political parties an opportunity to respond to this call at a political forum at our AGM in July, and again at our Hikoī in September. While public interest is building, real action by governing parties has been limited.

A major focus for CPAG in 2014 has been to educate and inform the wider public about the connection between public policy and child poverty, and to create a groundswell of support for improved policies for children. Strong regional groups in Whangarei, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin provide local leadership on child poverty through networking, discussion groups, media contact and events. CPAG built a strong support base on social media, using this important tool to connect with a wider audience. Just prior to the election more than 1500 people walked up Queen Street to Aotea Square joining our hikoī to end child poverty.

Sadly, the 2014 Child Poverty Monitor showed there was little change in the statistics over the past year and far too many New Zealand children still live in poverty. As outlined in CPAG's major research projects during the year, issues like unaffordable, sub-standard housing leading to ill-health and transience, or the impact of punitive, unfair benefit sanctions on sole parents, are simply too difficult to be addressed by piecemeal measures. Bold and substantial commitment is needed to improve the incomes and welfare of our poorest families so that all New Zealand children can thrive.



Janfrie Wakim
CPAG Co-Convenor



Alan Johnson
CPAG Co-Convenor

Our accomplishments

High quality independent research

An important aspect of CPAG's work is to provide evidence about the causes and effects of child poverty and to develop policy recommendations to reduce the burden of child poverty on families and our society.

Our children, our choice: priorities for policy

During the 2014-15 year, CPAG undertook a significant update of its policy recommendations, publishing a series of papers on each of its core policy areas, written by experts in their field: health, ECCE, compulsory schooling, housing and incomes. The series, published together in September as **Our children our choice: priorities for policy**, gave an overview of the situation for New Zealand's poorest children in the lead up to the 2014 general election, and recommended child-focused policies to reduce child poverty and mitigate its effects.

[Our Children, Our Choice: Priorities for Policy Series \(Sept 2014\)](#)

[Part 1: Child Health & Poverty](#)

[Part 2: Early Childhood Care and Education, and Child Poverty](#)

[Part 3: Compulsory schooling and child poverty](#)

[Part 4: Housing market change and their impact on children](#)

[Part 5: Adequate incomes to address child poverty](#)

The complexities of "relationship" in the welfare system and the consequences for children.

In a ground-breaking report released in December 2014, CPAG argued New Zealand's social security framework is based on outdated ideas of the nature of relationships and too often fails to protect the needs of children in the 21st century.

The report, [The complexities of "relationship" in the welfare system and the consequences for children](#), said the use of a 'couple' as the unit for determining welfare support is confusing and outdated, and can have serious harmful effects on children, especially when mothers are imprisoned for so-called 'benefit fraud'. The report was written to raise awareness of these disturbing issues and to start a national conversation around making the welfare system fit for the 21st century.

All available support should be wrapped around sole parents caring for children on their own. And a sole parent re-partnering well can be a good thing for all concerned. Current policy gives the impression that attempts to do this must be deterred and punished. Any relationships, even very unsatisfactory ones that hurt children, mean sole parents can lose their independent source of income.

'It shouldn't be this hard': children, poverty and disability

Disabled children are more likely to live in poverty than other children, increasing the barriers they face to participation and inclusion in society. In a report on children, poverty and disability, released in March 2015, CPAG said disabled children are often invisible in discussions about policies that affect them, meaning their rights and interests, and those of their care-givers, are overlooked.

CPAG was particularly concerned about the impact of a significant decline in the number of Child Disability Allowances (CDA) granted annually by Work and Income. The CDA is a non-income-tested allowance available to parents to help compensate for the time and expense of caring for a disabled child. The number of new CDAs granted has almost halved since 2008 while the number of disabled children has increased, from 92,000 in 2001 to 95,000 in 2013. Over the same period spending on the Disability Allowance dropped 14% in real terms.

Benefit sanctions and children: urgent need for greater clarity

CPAG released two new monitoring reports on benefit sanctions during the year.

In June 2014 CPAG called for transparent monitoring of benefit sanctions and their impact on children in its report, [Benefit Sanctions: Children not seen - not heard](#), and said the welfare of children affected by the government's benefit sanctions remained a deep concern.

In September 2014 CPAG released a third Benefit Sanctions monitoring report. [Benefit sanctions and children: an urgent need for greater clarity](#) and said the Ministry of Social Development is still providing only minimal information about benefit sanctions. CPAG again called on government to provide robust and transparent information about the number of children affected and the impact on their wellbeing.

The lack of data on benefit sanctions means the public has little idea of whether the government's "relentless focus on work" is actually improving outcomes for children, or protecting vulnerable children - something the government claims is a goal of welfare reform. Better data is also needed about parents who have moved off a benefit to assess if outcomes for their children have improved.

Living on a greatly reduced income, with benefits cut by half, has major consequences for children so it is

critical to know the number of children affected by sanctions and for how long. The public deserves to know the impact of pouring millions of dollars into reforming social assistance.

Transience - the revolving door

In May 2014 CPAG released new [research on transience or student mobility in Auckland schools](#) at Manurewa East School in Auckland. A survey of 52 schools in south and west Auckland found transience was a significant issue for low decile schools - so much so that one principal referred to his school as having "a revolving door".

Many of the schools surveyed commented on the adverse impacts of student transience on children, their peers and the schools themselves. They noted that transient students often fall behind academically and may suffer socially as well.

There is strong evidence that transience has a negative impact on children's educational outcomes. Education Review Office reports show that transient students are often behind their peers and do not have equality of opportunity.

A key finding of the report was that the education sector could not deal with the issue of transience alone - this is a systemic issue and New Zealand must address the causes of transience by introducing housing policies that actively address the shortage of affordable, decent housing in the areas where low-income families live, particularly in South Auckland where families are forced to shift accommodation and consequently the schools their children attend.

New Zealanders' attitudes to child poverty research

In early September 2014 CPAG commissioned for the first time a survey on [New Zealanders' thoughts and attitudes about child poverty](#). This report was a great indication to us and other organisations that CPAG's work around raising awareness on child poverty issues has made a real impact. Results from the report showed 80% of people agreed child poverty is an important problem in New Zealand. Other questions asked of participants included their thoughts on the consequences of poverty in childhood and possible solutions as well as which solutions they considered were most effective in reducing child poverty.

CPAG Activity 2014-15

Research and Submissions	13
Articles and blogs	23
CPAG Events	19
Press releases	37
Guest Presentations	35
Number of website visits total	76,426
Average unique views total	44,210
Facebook supporters	5700
Twitter Followers	1700

Presenting the findings

CPAG is committed to communicating its research and analysis to policy makers, media, politicians and the wider public. In the 2014-15 year, CPAG gave more than 35 presentations at a range of forums across the country, to audiences which included professional groups, school children, tertiary students, faith groups and community organisations. Highlights included:

May 2014

CPAG & child poverty | NZ Child and Youth Epidemiology service | **Nikki Turner**

Child health in NZ: How could we do better? | Grand Round, Rotorua Hospital | **Innes Asher**

June 2014

Child poverty in NZ panel discussion | Child Poverty in NZ launch | Auckland Business School | **Susan St John**

What would we do if we really cared about child poverty and inequality? | Conference, Causes and consequences of inequality | Victoria School of Governance | **Susan St John.**

July 2014

Child Poverty: What we know and what we can/should do | Evening lecture series on social practice | UNITEC Waitakere | **Michael O'Brien.**

The continuing problem of child poverty in New Zealand and what we can do about it | Symposium on women and children | Women's Refuge | **Susan St John.**

CPAG & Child Poverty | Edmund Rice Justice Advocacy Aotearoa Conference | **Janfrie Wakim, Mike O'Brien, Gillian Roach, Sharon Ryan.**

Recent welfare reforms and sanctions | How might this affect your patients? | Paediatric Update | **Innes Asher, Donna Wynd.**

August 2014

What might social housing become? | NZ Fabian Society | **Alan Johnson.**

Sept 2014

Child Poverty and inequalities | Tick for Kids Pre-election forum: University of Otago Wellington | **Gretchen Leuthart.**

October 2014

A time for action: what will it take to eliminate child and youth poverty and inequity in Aotearoa | NZ Population Health Congress | **Nikki Turner.**

Inequality, child poverty and social services | Social Service Providers of Aotearoa Conference | Invercargill | **Mike O'Brien**

November 2014

NZ Angel Funds Conference | Wellington | CPAG / Nga Tangata | **Claire Dale**

Child Poverty – The state of the nation's children | Paediatric Society Annual Scientific Meeting | **Innes Asher**

Events

CPAG connected with many supporters and allies at successful events across the country during the year, including report launches, forums and fundraisers. Highlights included our annual post-budget breakfasts, held in five main centres and the End Child poverty hikoi in September.

Take steps to end child poverty hikoi

On September 6th, more than 1500 people marched up Queen Street in Auckland to demand action on child poverty. It was a powerful and emotional experience to come together with so many people and to see our colourful banners, balloons fill the main thoroughfare and stop the traffic. The hikoi, blessed by Ngāti Whātua Orākei, was held in partnership with the Tick for Kids campaign to raise awareness of child poverty in the lead up to the election and the event received extensive media coverage. CPAG was delighted to welcome representatives from all the major political parties to hear their views on a cross-party plan to end child poverty, and privileged to hear our motivating guest speakers including Bryan Bruce, Uesifili Unasa, Henare O'Keefe, Alicia Heremaia, a Living Wage rep, actress Lucy Lawless and Alan Johnson of CPAG. A huge THANK YOU to everyone who came and marched. Thanks also to all the fabulous volunteers from many different groups who made it happen.

[Call for Action on child poverty](#) Radio NZ, 7 Sept

[Child poverty hikoi brings Queen St to standstill](#) ONE News, 6 Sept

[Crowds march for poverty awareness](#) Herald on Sunday, 7 Sept

Nationwide post-budget breakfasts and budget analysis

CPAG again hosted capacity audiences at its annual post-budget breakfasts, held in five main centres - Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Whangarei in 2014. CPAG is grateful to the Public Health Association for their help with hosting the Wellington and Christchurch events.

CPAG's budget analysis received extensive media coverage, providing a child-focused alternative to mainstream budget coverage. CPAG was delighted by the government announcement of funding for free GP visits and prescriptions for all children under 13. CPAG has long advocated for this policy and congratulated the government for recognising the importance of supporting families with young children. CPAG recommends this initiative is extended to age 18.. The policy came into effect on July 1, 2015.

Our children, our choice - flagship launch

CPAG's flagship publication 'Our Children Our Choice' was officially launched on 9th of September at Mt Roskill Kindergarten in Auckland, followed by evening events in both Auckland and Wellington. We had some very insightful speakers and attendees. Contributors Marianne Kayes and Nola Harvey, both important figures in the early childhood care and education sector, attended the Mt Roskill Kindergarten launch attended and held a Q&A session. Authors Prof Innes Asher and Assoc Prof Susan St John, along with Otara-Papatoetoe local board member Fa'anana Efeso Collins, spoke at the Auckland evening launch in Manukau. Wellington had speeches from author Dr Claire Dale, NZ economist Dr Brian Easton and comments from grassroots community members.

Wellington discussion groups

To support the release of the policy series, Our children, our choice: Priorities for Policy, CPAG Wellington held four popular public discussions in the lead up to the election, bringing a wide range of supporters and wider public together to build action for change.

[Public Discussion 1: Calls to Action](#)

[Public Discussion 2: Education and Child Poverty](#)

[Public Discussion 3: Housing and Child Poverty](#)

[Public Discussion 4: Building Political Commitment](#)

Big picture competition

CPAG was delighted to support The Big Picture Competition run by the Anglican Church in 2014. The nationwide schools' competition gave students a chance to learn about child poverty and take action. To enter the competition, schools and youth groups created big pictures to show what children in their neighbourhood need to be healthy and free from poverty.

The pictures entered in the competition were of a very high standard and showed great understanding of the causes of child poverty as well as innovative and creative solutions. The pictures were exhibited at Parliament last year and were also shown in Auckland with the support of the Anglican Trust for Women and Children in April 2015, at the “Don’t Waste Let Them Taste” exhibition at Fresh Gallery in Otara.

Face TV series put spotlight on child poverty

CPAG proudly supported a TV series about child poverty in Aotearoa created by lawyer, journalist and social activist Catriona MacLennan in 2014.

The six part series, which screened on Sky Channel 83, gave a thorough overview of child poverty in New Zealand in the lead up to the 2014 election, with episodes focusing on key policy areas including health, housing, education, early childhood education and care, and family incomes. Catriona MacLennan talked to leading experts from a range of disciplines and organisations about the impact of poverty on children and practical solutions for change.

Growing support

The past year has seen strong growth in interest in child poverty issues and, correspondingly, in support for CPAG. The number of supporters on our database rose from 2400 to nearly 3000, an increase of 25% for the year. Donations also rose 36%, from \$50,253 to \$68,351. The number of regular donors continues to climb and CPAG is particularly grateful for a significant bequest from the estate of Neil and Jean Smith who supported CPAG from its earliest days. The website continues to be an invaluable resource for our supporters and the wider public, averaging over a thousand visitors each week.

CPAG continued to provide a strong voice for children on **social media** during 2014/15, with over 5700 supporters on Facebook and 1700 Twitter followers at the end of March 2015. Our posts are read and shared by thousands of people, raising awareness of child poverty issues and providing a forum for discussion and sharing.

Amazing fundraisers

Hector Hines walked the Te Araroa trail in the South Island from Picton to Bluff (1200km) in 40 days in January, using the opportunity to generate awareness about the unacceptable level of child poverty in New Zealand and to fundraise for CPAG.

CPAG partnered with the Auckland Welsh Choir and Devonport Chamber Orchestra for a charity concert in November 2014. This was a delightful afternoon of music and refreshment, and CPAG is grateful to the Welsh choir for their kind donation and the many supporters who attended.

Gifted Mt Eden artist Sallyann Hingston also supported CPAG, donating a portion of sales from her successful art exhibition to support our ongoing work to eliminate child poverty. We are very grateful for Sallyann's support.

Grant application outcomes

June 2014 – Charles Rupert Stead trust – Applied and received funding towards our Disability research “It shouldn't be this hard”: children, poverty and disability”.

September 2014 - J R McKenzie Trust - Applied and received funding for three years for operational expenses.

October 2014 – Ted Manson Charitable trust – Applied for a research project funding application but application was declined.

March - 2015 ASB Community Trust – Applied for research project funding application and CPAG will hear the outcome in July or August 2015.

Organisation and management

CPAG is a small, but highly effective organisation which operates on a modest budget. The Management Committee consists of 11 elected members, supported by co-opted members who represent regional networks or have specific expertise. CPAG's work is enhanced by hugely energetic people in our regional networks who sustain and develop their local groups through a range of events and activities.

Executive Officer: Marianna Munting has invested the position with great initiative and flair. Marianna took a year's maternity leave from October 2014 and was succeeded by Celia Hayes. The Management Committee is indebted to both Marianna and Celia for their loyal commitment and proficiency in this challenging but pivotal role.

Communications Officer: Gillian Roach worked hard part-time throughout the year raising CPAG's profile via social media, press releases and providing vital communications with other centres and organisations. Her devotion to CPAG and willingness to shoulder tasks in often stressful situations has been appreciated constantly.

Donna Wynd CPAG, part-time researcher and analyst contributed her wide range of skills and expertise to produce a range of publications and occasional opinion pieces. We thank Donna in particular for the publications for which she conducted research.

Dr Claire Dale was contracted to coordinate the writing and publication of CPAG's policy paper series, Our Children, Our Choice: Priorities for Policy and did a skilful job drawing together numerous writers, each with tight timeframes.

As ever, CPAG is indebted to Terry Levenberg and Apropos for their outstanding support with our website and branding. The philanthropic trusts who have donated over the past year and funded research are acknowledged here with deep gratitude; J R McKenzie Trust, Hostel of the Holy Name Trust, Caritas Aotearoa, Alexander Harold Watson Trust, Charles Rupert Stead Trust and the Auckland City Mission for continuing to provide office space. CPAG appreciates and thanks all the members and donors who have boosted numbers and funds this past year.

To list the remarkable people who volunteer their precious time to CPAG nationwide is impossible. We are delighted to have had the support of an enthusiastic and engaged base of fund-raisers, volunteers and donors over the past year. The Management Committee gives its sincere and profound thanks to every person, in all parts of Aotearoa-New Zealand, who has contributed to, supported and encouraged the work of CPAG in 2014-2015.

Our personal thanks go to the elected Management Committee and co-opted members for contributing their impressive collective talent and expertise, and their sustained commitment to the goals of CPAG and to children.

This is a pepeha from Sir James Hēnare

Kua tawhiti ke to haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu.

He tino nui rawa ou mahi, kia kore e mahi nui tonu.

We have come too far, not to go further

We have done too much, not to do more