

CHiLD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

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PRESS RELEASE: Child poverty responsible for both hunger and obesity - experts
11 April, 2008

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has responded to Parekura Horomia's comments that some children skip breakfast to 'stay trim' by saying it's time to face facts about child poverty in New Zealand.

They say poverty has a major role in both hunger and obesity in our schools.

CPAG says that while some struggling families have been helped by government initiatives and have been able to take advantage of the recent economic boom, too many others have fallen further behind.

"With inadequate wages, benefit rates that are too low and limited assistance the poorest are worse off than they were twenty years ago. We see this reflected in trends such as child hunger, food bank use and rising obesity," says Assoc-Prof Mike O'Brien.

The group says that quality breakfast programmes in decile one to three schools are crucial to addressing urgent need. But they are not enough.

"With basic food prices increasing rapidly something must be done to make sure these kids have a fighting chance of getting a decent education – breakfasts are one way to do this," says O'Brien.

"Lack of income is the key cause of poverty, however," he says. "Benefit levels must be increased and support for those in work strengthened. There must be a strong national commitment to ending child poverty in New Zealand."

Kate Green, a visiting UK child poverty expert and Chief Executive of CPAG UK is currently in New Zealand sharing her country's experience of reducing poverty.

"Our target to end child poverty by 2020 has been an immensely helpful framework for ensuring that child poverty stays on the political agenda," says Kate.

CPAG NZ Director Janfrie Wakim says, "In rich countries, like New Zealand, it can be easy to forget that poverty exists. Sometimes people blame lifestyle choices and poor parenting, and overlook the big picture. But a firm commitment to ending child poverty would reinforce the need to work together to protect all our children."

*Kate Green will be giving a lecture in Auckland this Monday 14 April at 7pm, University of Auckland. The topic is "Child Poverty: What makes a difference? Lessons from the UK."

Information on Kate's lecture: www.cpag.org.nz

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Background – Kate Green:

- ◆ Brief biography of Kate: <http://213.86.122.139/about/k-green.jsp>
- ◆ Australian article featuring Kate discussing her work against child poverty
<http://www.cpag.org.nz/resources/articles/res1134959492.pdf>
- ◆ Excerpts from Australian coverage of Kate's visit there for a conference in 2005
<http://www.cpag.org.nz/resources/articles/res1134959110.pdf>.
- ◆ Child Poverty Action Group NZ was inspired by CPAG UK, however they are two independent organisations and are not formally affiliated.