

CHiLD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

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Press release

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CPAG seeks to meet ministers following significant legal decision

The Child Poverty Action Group is seeking a meeting with the Government following a decision released today by the Human Rights Review Tribunal that the In-Work Tax Credit (IWTC) discriminates against some 200,000 of the most deprived children in New Zealand.

The Tribunal decision on the case *Child Poverty Action Group vs Attorney General, 2008*, states that children in families on an income-tested benefit are disadvantaged in a “real and substantive way.”

CPAG spokesperson Janfrie Wakim said, “We ask the new Government to make the IWTC available to all low-income families with children, regardless of whether they are working, or how they lose their jobs. This would be the best anti-child poverty, anti-recessionary spending the Government could do.”

CPAG welcomes the Tribunal’s careful analysis on discrimination. CPAG is however disappointed that the Tribunal accepted the Crown’s argument that the disadvantage was justified by the work incentive it may provide to a small number of parents.

CPAG considers the justification arguments to be weak, because any social good from the policy’s small increase in employment does not justify the proven harm to so many thousands of children. Much of this employment may disappear in the recession.

However, CPAG notes the clear finding of discrimination is a strong endorsement of their claim.

The Tribunal noted with concern that human rights legislation was inadequately considered in the development of the Working for Families package. This puts Parliament on notice that human rights must be considered in future social policy development.

*The Tribunal's decision (~7Mb) is available on request from admin@cpag.org.nz