

Child Poverty Action Group

www.cpag.org.nz

Media Release November 17th 2009

Don't make children the victims of the recession

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) says the ReStart package has been a puny response to the effects of the recession. Whatever the intention of the package, it has not protected children.

Families who lose their jobs also lose entitlement to at least \$60 a week of Family Assistance for their children unless they get a payment under ReStart that allows them to keep this money for 16 weeks.

Figures from MSD show that up to September 2009, only 2470 families had been helped in this way. "It is far too hard to access and it is far too limited in its application" says CPAG's spokesperson Susan St John

"We know that many, many thousands of families are either struggling on with reduced hours, or have had to access a benefit in these tough times."

Figures released by the Sunday Star Times under the Official Information Act show that the number of families needing special grants to pay for school uniforms, stationery, exam fees and compulsory fees has soared in the past year.

"We estimate that 240,000 children live in families that do not qualify for the additional help given to others in the form of the In Work Tax Credit" says St John.

This payment has already been judged to be discriminatory in the courts.

It would be so much more fair and sensible to give all low income children the same weekly amount whether or not their parents lost their jobs or were unable to find sufficient hours of work.

If these families had the extra \$3000 net or more per year, they would find the struggle to pay school costs much less onerous. Come on Prime Minister John Key, do the right thing.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/3063617/School-costs-push-families-to-the-brink>

Contacts:

- Donna Wynd, CPAG researcher and spokesperson. Tel 0212377779
- Dr Susan St John, CPAG economics spokesperson Associate Professor, Economics Dept, University of Auckland tel. work (09) 923-7432; home (09) 377-8889; mobile (027) 536 4536

-