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## PRESS RELEASE

**Embargoed until the 14<sup>th</sup> October**

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission citing the Child Tax Credit as a discriminatory and damaging piece of legislation affecting hundreds of thousands of New Zealand children.

Originally named the Independent Tax Credit, it was introduced by the National government in 1996. At the time, Labour Ministers were vocal and passionate in their opposition to it, claiming it was “unfair”, “mean” and “discriminatory” and vowed to repeal it, if and when they became the Government. Now into their second term, no action has yet been taken.

CPAG spokesperson Susan St John explained that the Child Tax Credit, worth a maximum of \$15 per week per child, supplements Family Support payments for low income families. However, it is ONLY available to some low-income families. Those families who receive ANY part of their income from the state through a benefit (unemployment, DPB, invalids, veterans) or ACC over 3 months, NZ Super or student allowances are deemed undeserving.

The Child Tax Credit was introduced to provide an incentive for people on benefits to find full-time work, but was tagged to the number of children in a family. “The welfare and living standards of children are now compromised because of the source of their parent’s low income ” said Ms St John. “If the Government wishes to incentivise people off benefits, then better-focused policies should be employed. Children’s supplements should not be used for this purpose”.

Susan St John went on to comment – “We even have the ludicrous position where parents whom the state has deemed unable to work, or not expected to work (eg people on ACC invalids, pensions or student benefits) are denied these vital additional resources for their children”.

CPAG is challenging this legislation through the Human Rights Act, and its Amendment Act which came into force on 31 December 2001 requiring government agencies and policies to meet the same non-discriminatory standards required in the private sector. It is very much a test case, with no other well-publicised challenges of government legislation to date.

CPAG hopes that the Human Rights Commission will seriously consider the complaint, and make appropriate recommendations to the Government. “CPAG wants the extension of the Child Tax Credit to all low income families – regardless of the source of that income - and hopes that the Government will live up to its previous commitment, and repeal this discriminatory entitlement” Susan St John concluded.

For further details, or a copy of the complaint, please contact....

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