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**PRESS RELEASE: CPAG welcomes legal victory for human rights advocacy in New Zealand**

Child Poverty Action Group has welcomed yesterday's decision by the High Court allowing the group to act on behalf of children affected by discriminatory government policies.

CPAG's lawyer, Assistant Director of Human Rights Proceedings Catherine Rodgers, says "The courts have once again supported the spirit and intent of the Human Rights Act, and asserted the right of advocacy groups to bring discrimination cases."

The Crown argued that affected people must undertake the burden of bringing their own cases. However the courts have sent a clear message that affected individuals - already disadvantaged by discrimination - should not be compelled to fight their own legal battles as well, says Ms Rodgers.

The CPAG case claims that the In-Work Payment, part of the government's Working for Families package, discriminates against approximately 230,000 children who do not qualify for it because of their parents' work status.

"This kind of discrimination has worsened inequalities for a generation of our poorest children," stated CPAG economics spokesperson Dr Susan St John. "Discrimination in family assistance was introduced in 1996 by the National-led government of the day, with its Child Tax Credit. It has not been removed by the current administration. On the contrary, it has been extended.

"Following the removal this week of another legal obstacle, we are looking forward to the substance of our argument being heard," she says. "Children's needs do not diminish when parents cannot work. It is time we treated all children as deserving of support."

**Summary of decisions in the case so far:**

- Following a preliminary hearing in 2005, CPAG won access to the Human Rights Review Tribunal for its case alleging discrimination in the then-current Child Tax Credit as well as the In Work Payment introduced in April 2006 as part of the government 's Working for Families package.
- The decision to grant access set a precedent for non-government organisations. It established the right of groups such as CPAG to challenge discrimination in public policy, regardless of whether they themselves are directly affected.
- The Crown disputed the right of public interest groups like CPAG to bring cases to the Tribunal and unsuccessfully appealed that decision
- Subsequently, the Government requested a judicial review of the Human Rights Review Tribunal decision, heard on Monday October 16 2006. The decision following the review was delivered Monday 6 November 2006.