

# CHiLD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

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**PRESS RELEASE: New mothers need support, not coercion say child advocates**  
29 November 2007

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) has expressed relief today at the cancellation of plans to give \$100 vouchers to new mothers who leave hospital early.

CPAG spokesperson Dr Susan St John agrees with criticism that use of the voucher would have been coercion of those with the greatest need. CPAG agrees with Maternity Services Consumer Council co-ordinator Lynda Williams who said "The people it will appeal to most are those who most need a lot of care and support - people from poor areas."

More coercion is not high on the list of what low-income mothers need, says Dr St John; a secure, adequate, easily accessible system of tax credits and benefits is.

"Already too many mothers are struggling to put their children first while surviving on inadequate wage and benefit levels. Parents also have to contend with a highly conditional, unfair tax credit system which fails to protect children by leaving at least one in five of them in poverty," says Dr St John.

"As the Paediatric Society has shown this week, deprivation is resulting in distressingly high levels of poverty-related disease and dysfunction among children and their families.

"Fixing this will take a lot more than a one-off of \$100. Already our poorest new mothers miss out on the \$1200 parental tax credit, as well as at least \$60 per week of in-work payment that other low income families can get if they meet the work requirements," says St John.

CPAG health spokesperson Dr Nikki Turner agrees. "New mothers often need lots of support to establish breastfeeding, to learn to care for their babies and to recover fully themselves. The economic and social costs of not supporting them in this critical time can be significant," she says.