

CHiLD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

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Child advocates say work-for-dole a failed policy

Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) NZ has expressed disappointment at the National party's plans to resurrect work-for-the-dole requirements for domestic purposes beneficiaries.

"This return to the failed policies of the 1990s shows that National have failed to learn anything about the realities of balancing care of children and working, for single parents. Sole parent families have double the rate of disabled children compared to the general population and there are real concerns about who will look after these children if their parents are working," says CPAG economics spokesperson Dr Susan St John.

"It is time our politicians understood that caring for children is work, and that caring for them without a partner, and on a woefully inadequate benefit, is very hard work indeed. National should reconsider this punitive approach to sole parents, and start looking at policies that will enable them to adequately feed and house their children," says Dr St John.

CPAG's Donna Wynd says that there is little chance that working for 15 hours per week will help lift beneficiaries out of poverty. "The proposal to shift the abatement threshold to \$100 is welcome but doesn't go far enough.

"If you are expecting people to work for 15 hours then it would seem logical that the threshold should be 15 hours at the minimum wage, or \$180. As things stand, sole parents face a marginal tax rate of 50 percent on every dollar they earn over \$100, and 90 percent on earnings of over \$180.

"This is not going to lift anyone out of poverty," says Wynd. "Training and work policy should prioritise better outcomes for children. It should not be just a box-ticking exercise to reduce benefit numbers."

The group says that if political parties really wanted to help lift children out of poverty then they would raise benefit rates and make the In-Work Tax Credit available to all low-income families.