



Media Statement
2 December 2014

Public health doctors welcome Child Poverty Monitor report and warn against complacency

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine has welcomed a report which shows there has been a small reduction in the number of children living in poverty, but says much work still needs to be done.

The newly published Child Poverty Monitor 2014 notes a reduction from 27% to 24% of children in households living in relative poverty.

“But this means that one in four of New Zealand children are missing out on a good start in life. We cannot be complacent about this slight reduction. There are still far too many children living in hardship and they need to be our priority”, says NZ College of Public Health Medicine president, Dr Caroline McElnay.

“It is not acceptable to have 34% of tamariki Māori and 28% of Pacific children living in poor households compared with 16% of children of European heritage”.

The College says the social and economic consequences of not taking action to reduce child poverty in New Zealand are too costly for everyone.

“To reduce child poverty, we need a national cross-sectoral strategy embedded in legislation, with measurable targets that are monitored. In particular we need to reduce hardship amongst Māori and Pacific children, and see priority given to very young and those living in persistent material poverty.

Consideration should be given to healthy and affordable housing, high quality maternity and child health services, quality early childhood education, and good quality nutrition in schools.

“This may require society to re-consider its spending priorities, as currently kiwi kids are more than twice as likely to be in poverty than our senior citizens” says Dr McElnay.

“Poverty is an overwhelming and pervasive factor in preventable diseases, injuries, disability, and death for children in NZ. It is a persistent problem for New Zealand with long term risks to the health and prosperity of all New Zealanders.

“By eliminating poverty and supporting the health of NZ’s children, we will build a stronger foundation for the health and wellbeing of our whole population”.

Further information:

The NZ College of Public Health Medicine Child Poverty and Health policy statement can be downloaded [here](#).

ENDS

For more information contact Dr Caroline McElnay, NZCPHM President: 021 800 418