



Media Release

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Kiwis will pay dearly for ongoing child poverty issues

This year's Child Poverty Monitor highlights a worsening public health issue that will cost the country dearly over the long-term, says the New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine.

"The Monitor shows clearly that child poverty creates health impacts that affect our society as a whole and create a considerable ongoing cost burden on society," says College president, Dr Caroline McElnay.

"This is not just a case of one or two children or families suffering –child poverty is a persistent problem for New Zealand with long term risks and costs to the health and prosperity of all New Zealanders.

"A lot of government spending goes towards addressing the issues associated with poverty. Healthy and affordable housing, high quality maternity and child health services, quality early childhood education, and good quality nutrition in schools can all help mitigate the impacts of child poverty on health and well-being but we can and should be doing more to reduce the level of child poverty in the first place. This will require society to re-consider its spending priorities. Are our children – and the future of our society - important or not?"

The College of Public Health Medicine wants a national, cross-sectoral strategy to reduce child poverty, embedded in legislation, with measurable targets that are monitored.

"In particular we need to reduce hardship amongst Māori and Pacific children, and give priority to the very young and those living in persistent material poverty," Dr McElnay said.

"Child poverty is actually a choice – a choice by our society and by our politicians."

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