

Welfare debate crucial for wellbeing and health: PHA

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The Public Health Association (PHA) is welcoming the debate generated by the recent release of two reports on the future of social welfare in New Zealand: the Welfare Working Group options paper, and the Alternative Welfare Working Group report released today.

“Income is a big part of what’s needed to be healthy and to flourish,” says the PHA’s National Executive Officer, Dr Gay Keating.

“The World Health Organization (WHO) is clear that countries need systems of social protection sufficient for healthy living. It says social protection is needed across life, in childhood, in working life and in old age. The WHO says people also need protection in case of specific shocks, such as illness, disability, and loss of income or work.”

Dr Keating points out that the Children’s Social Health Monitor released this week supports that international expert evidence.

“New Zealand children are sick and dying unnecessarily when there is not enough household income for a dry house and enough food to eat, a warm coat in winter and shoes. Our future depends on making sure that all our children become the best they can.

“Just last week an insightful report from the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) warned rich countries such as New Zealand that we all lose out when sections of our children are unnecessarily left too far behind the rest of society.

“The welfare debate is about how we, as a society, can be broadminded enough to ensure a fair go for everyone – whether they are in employment or not – and responsible enough to take the advice of the World Health Organization, to protect all of our children’s health from hardship the same way we protect our old folks,” Dr Keating said.

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