

## **\$6 billion a year is money the government cannot afford to waste**

**Public Health Association media release, 15 August 2011**

The Public Health Association says the \$6b a year the country spends trying to repair the damage done by the country largely ignoring children, is money no responsible government should waste.

A report commissioned by the group Every Child Counts has found that New Zealand is ranked 28<sup>th</sup> of 30 OECD countries for the wellbeing of children and young people. Only Turkey and Mexico ranked lower. It also invested less in its children than most developed nations.

“The two are undoubtedly linked,” says the PHA’s National Executive Director, Dr Gay Keating.

“By stinting on the funding of the healthy development of our young, the country will assuredly pay out several-fold in years to come, in health, justice and welfare.

“UNICEF argues that most of the serious problems facing today’s industrialised countries have their roots in child poverty. A child in poverty is three times as likely to be sick as a child growing up in a higher income household because so many of them have inadequate nutritious food, and their parents cannot afford to take them to the doctor.

“Further, they do worse at school and are more likely to later become poor, and sick, as an adult.

“The government needs to lower the price of healthy essentials such as vegetables, we need to build more homes because there just aren’t enough, and visits to the doctor, including out of hours visits, should be free for under-18s.

Dr Keating says while children are not the only needy group in our society, if the country does not meet their needs, there will be even more needy adults in the future.

“It’s not rocket science to realise that supporting our young should be front and centre of any Government’s agenda, to reap the enormous benefits of a more healthy and stable society not so far down track.”

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