

Public Health Association media release

1 September 2011

All government policy must be assessed by ‘income inequality framework’

The Public Health Association Conference has heard a call for the government to establish an income inequality framework through which to measure all proposed policy.

“New Zealanders have a basic sense of fairness and many might be shocked to realise just how unequal incomes have become in this country,” PHA Executive Council member Eileen Brown told delegates at Lincoln University in Canterbury.

“About 750,000 New Zealanders earn less than \$15 an hour. That is about one in three workers. At the other end of the pay scale, we have many CEOs with an annual salary in the millions. Such a gap has been shown in many countries to produce a plethora of social and health problems.

“Those problems affect every New Zealander, regardless of how much they earn. Without the government being proactive, they will get only worse.”

She told delegates the 2009 New Zealand Values Survey indicated that while most New Zealanders believed people should be rewarded for their skills and hard work, they also believed that high earners were getting too much, and the lowest, too little.

Eileen Brown said an income inequalities filter through which to pass all proposed policy would allow the government and the public to know what effect that policy was likely to have on the income gap.

“High incidence of obesity, mental health problems and teen pregnancies, high rates of incarceration, infectious diseases and childhood deprivation – none of these will go away or improve, if there is no action on New Zealanders’ very unequal incomes.”

–

Media are invited to attend the whole or any part of the Conference.

To arrange interviews with Eileen Brown or any Conference speaker, please contact Penny Cooper (Conference media liaison): 0274 547 584.

Links:

- [Conference website](#)
- [Conference handbook and programme](#)
- [Presenter abstracts and information](#)
- [Presenter abstracts only.](#)