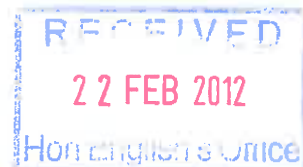




MANAAKITIA A TATOU TAMARIKI

**CHILDREN'S
COMMISSIONER**



21 February 2012

Hon Bill English
Minister of Finance
Chair, Ministerial Committee on Poverty
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

Dear Minister English

Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty

I am committed to contributing to the current discussion about poverty and being part of finding pragmatic, evidence-based and realistic strategies to address an issue that disproportionately impacts on children.

Based on my thinking and conversations about what could be a useful contribution, I am in the process of establishing an *Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty*. The Group will be tasked with providing me with independent advice on both short and long term actions that can be taken to reduce child poverty. The Terms of Reference that outline my expectations of the Group are attached for your reference.

The Group members (as attached) have agreed in principle and we are working through the logistics of meeting times and crowded diaries. They bring expertise in areas of health, service delivery, community, business, employment, family functioning, whanau, Pacific communities, education achievement, law, child development, and housing. Members also bring knowledge of recent policy initiatives including the Welfare Working Group and Tax Advisory Group and of child advocacy.

I have tasked them with delivering their initial thinking by August and producing a final report in December. I have designed this to be as useful to the Ministerial Committee on Child Poverty as possible and welcome your advice on your timelines.

I will operate openly with 'no surprises' and welcome the opportunity to engage with you and your Committee.

Manaakitia a tatou tamariki, taiohi hoki

Freephone 0800 224 453 e-mail children@occ.org.nz

Wellington Office

Public Trust Building, Level 6, 117-125, Lambton Quay
PO Box 5610, Wellington 6145
Phone + 64 4 471-1410 Fax + 64 4 471-1418

Auckland Office

AMI House, Level 5, 63 Albert Street, Auckland 1010,
Phone + 64 9 303-2480
Fax + 64 9 303-2861

The work of the Group will be supported by a small secretariat whose role will be to prepare background material for Group discussions and support the Group to draft its reports.

To ensure the Group is as effective as possible, I ask you to consider making available a small number of officials (for example, a Treasury and a Ministry of Social Development official) as secondees to the secretariat. I appreciate this request comes in an environment where policy resources are stretched.

My rationale for this request is:

- The Group needs to be aware of and draw on current thinking and recent policy initiatives. In particular, the group needs to be informed of the welfare reform work programme and the White Paper for Vulnerable Children. Having officials within the process will ensure the Group is well informed;
- There is technical expertise within Ministries that will be valuable to support the Expert's discussions. Officials within the secretariat will be able to access this; and
- Officials can act as liaisons with key departments so that the thinking of the Expert's Group can be tested effectively.

I welcome your response and engaging with you over the coming months.

Yours sincerely



Dr Russell Wills
Children's Commissioner

Enc: Terms of Reference: Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty

Enc: Members of Expert Group: Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty