

MEDIA STATEMENT

For immediate release

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GOVERNMENT URGED TO PUT CHILDREN AT THE CENTRE OF SOCIAL POLICY AS CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REACH TIPPING POINT

Successive governments have failed children and young people in New Zealand, as 23 years of poor decisions and inactivity have resulted in breaches of children's rights reaching a tipping point.

This is according to a report by Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA), a non-profit organisation who have officially presented to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, providing supplementary information on the New Zealand Government's performance against the international UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC).

UNCROC is a legally-binding agreement setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of every child, regardless of their race, religion or abilities.

A delegation from ACYA and the New Zealand Law Society presented their report to the UN Committee in February this year but are present as official observers to the UN Committee's interrogation of the New Zealand Government in Geneva today (NZ time).

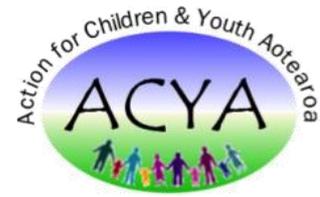
ACYA Deputy Chair Mereana Ruri said that the ACYA reports and supplementary information show the pervasive and cumulative effects of poverty and inequality on our children and have identified a need for an over-arching children's rights framework.

"We've had 23 years to get it right but successive governments have failed to build a strong foundation when it comes to children's rights in New Zealand and instead have taken to implementing ad hoc measures.

"The spotlight is on New Zealand this week at a time when things are going dramatically wrong for a large group of children in New Zealand. ACYA has been saying this for decades and now we're seeing the compounded effects of the lack of action by successive governments."

The ACYA report identifies seven priority issues that impact children's wellbeing:

1. Homelessness
2. Income levels (for many families these are too low to provide for living conditions necessary for a child's development)
3. The continued prevalence of preventable diseases and ill-health, associated with inequality



4. Improving prevention and protection from child abuse and neglect
5. Including 17 year olds within the youth justice system
6. Reforming our 1955 Adoption law.
7. An independent education tribunal

ACYA spokesperson Andrea Jamison said that the opportunity to engage with the UN Committee on New Zealand's performance was vital for moving forward.

"While we welcome recent announcements in the children's rights arena, such as the additional protections for children and greater preventative measures being signalled in the area of family violence, there remain a number of questions about the detail of what is being proposed.

"Our reports ensure the UN Committee has all the information they need to assist their discussions with the New Zealand Government delegates in Geneva.

"We look forward to hearing the Government's responses and reviewing the concluding observations of the UN when they are released, which we expect to be in October."

ENDS

For further information and to contact those in Geneva, please contact:

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About Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa

Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) is a non-profit coalition of non-governmental organisations, families and individuals, whose purpose is to promote and enhance the wellbeing of children and young people in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

ACYA promotes the rights of our children and young people through advocacy and monitoring of the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights instruments.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child covers all those aged under 18.

www.acya.org.nz