

Media Release

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SAVE THE CHILDREN NZ ENCOURAGES EMPLOYERS TO PROVIDE BETTER FACILITIES FOR MUM AND BABIES

As our Prime Minister returns to work this week to juggle running the country and a new baby Save the Children NZ are encouraging more employers to provide facilities to enable mothers to breastfeed their babies for longer.

August 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week, and while New Zealand compares well with other developed countries when it comes to initiating breastfeeding, our children are not being breastfed for as long as international guidelines recommend, says Save the Children NZ CEO Heidi Coetzee.

Both the World Health Organisation (WHO) and Save the Children's Nourishing the Youngest common approach recommend that babies are exclusively breastfed for the first six months.

However, research from the University of Auckland's *Growing Up in New Zealand* study (released in December 2017), found that 97 per cent of babies were breastfed initially but the number exclusively breastfed dropped to 53 per cent by four months and to 16 per cent by six months.

"The extension of paid parental leave from 18 to 22 weeks in July and to 26 weeks by July 2020 is a positive move; enabling women to stay at home and feed their babies if they are able; we'd also like to see more workplaces considering how they can support their staff members that are trying to juggle breastfeeding and returning to work," Ms Coetzee said.

"A key reason that women do not breastfeed or stop breastfeeding early is the need to return to work away from their babies."

Research has found that exclusive breastfeeding for six months has many health, psychological and financial benefits.

Ms Coetzee said, "Breastfeeding is the foundation of lifelong good health for babies and mothers. Breast milk and the experience of breastfeeding protects babies against malnutrition and infections, presents a unique mother-baby bonding opportunity, promotes psychological wellbeing for mothers and babies, and contributes to children's long-term cognitive development.

"Breastfeeding is the best option and while we recognise this is not possible for some mums, for New Zealand children to have the best possible start in life, more needs to be done to improve our rates of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months."

ENDS

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In New Zealand and around the world, we work every day to give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. When crisis strikes, and children are most vulnerable, we are always among the first to

respond and the last to leave. We ensure children's unique needs are met and their voices are heard. We deliver lasting results for millions of children, including those hardest to reach. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share.

For more information please contact: Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz