

Media Release: Thursday 17 May 2018, Wellington.



## **BUDGET'S POSITIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN WELCOMED**

The potential positive impact of this year's Budget on New Zealand and Pacific Island children has been welcomed by Save the Children New Zealand (SCNZ).

"Last week's announcement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs (MFAT), Winston Peters, of the biggest increase in aid in over a decade is certainly a positive move," said SCNZ's International Programmes Director Andrew Johnston.

This increase is long overdue and strengthens our ability to work with some of the most vulnerable communities in the Pacific. We hope to keep working with MFAT to scale up our work reducing child poverty and preparing communities for disasters across the Asia-Pacific.

"The funding will have an impact on the humanitarian work we also do in the Pacific such as responding to and preparing for cyclones and other disasters."

Save the Children also welcomed the number of announcements that allocate greater funding to families or services that support families including free doctors' visits and prescriptions to under 14 year olds.

Save the Children Advocacy, Strategy and Research Director Jacqui Southey said, "We are looking forward to seeing the impact these greater investments will have on the needs, wellbeing and rights of children. It is important to note that despite these investments there is much to be done to tackle inequalities, and the big issues of homelessness, child poverty, health – especially mental health, and education.

"The Families Package will boost the incomes of 384,000 families by around \$75 a week, however this increase will not be fully rolled out until 2020/21.

The Families Package - the centrepiece of the Government's pledge to tackle poverty - includes boosting Working for Families, introducing a \$60/week Best Start payment for families with newborns, and the winter energy payment.

"The Best Start Scheme is a positive investment in supporting New Zealand babies to get off to a good start in life. The first 1000 days of a child's life is crucial to their development and gains made at this time will benefit children throughout their lives.

"While these changes may be the most significant set of changes for low and middle income families for decades, more needs to be done to ensure the most vulnerable children are provided for.

"The Winter Energy Payment will provide much needed support for superannuitants and beneficiaries, however low earning families will not be eligible for this support. It would be a positive move to see these in families who struggle to heat their homes effectively in winter, be included in this provision in the future.

“We also support the Government’s investment of \$76.157 million over four years to frontline services that tackle family violence. This is an important starting place to revitalise services that have been underfunded for a long time now. Ending Family Violence in New Zealand must be a priority of not only the Government but of society throughout New Zealand.

“The Government’s additional allocation of \$76.157 million over four years is an important first step in supporting organisations that do vital work but have been stretched for a long time,” said Ms Southey.

“New Zealand has a tragic family violence record that has a terrible impact on children, we are pleased to finally see that funding has been allocated to help address this issue.”

## **ENDS**

Save the Children works in 120 countries across the world. The organisation responds to emergencies and works with children and their communities to ensure they survive, learn and are protected.

Save the Children NZ currently supports international programmes in Fiji, Cambodia, Bangladesh, Laos, Nepal, Indonesia, Thailand, and Mozambique. Areas of work include education and literacy, disaster risk reduction, and alleviating child poverty.

For more information please visit our website at [www.savethechildren.org.nz](http://www.savethechildren.org.nz) or contact: Ally Clelland, Communications Specialist, Save the Children NZ, phone 022 531 9514 or email [ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz](mailto:ally.clelland@scnz.org.nz)