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hosted by The Victoria Institute

Child Poverty in 'Godzone'?
Action for New Zealand Children Living in Poverty

Dr Airini

The University of Auckland, New Zealand



Wednesday, 24 April 2013

2.00pm – 3.30pm

Executive Boardroom, The Victoria Institute
300 Queen Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000

Places are limited, so please reply early to: Victoria.Institute@vu.edu.au



Seminar outline

New Zealand is a first-world nation with a child poverty problem. As New Zealanders, we like to believe 'Godzone' is a great place for children. For most children this is indeed true. But it is not so for children living in poverty. As many as 25 percent of New Zealand's children – about 270,000 – currently live in poverty. This is startling news. Such figures compare unfavourably with those of Australia and many European countries.

Child poverty brings extremely high individual, social and economic costs. For individual children, it can mean going to school hungry and living in a cold, damp house. Important childhood opportunities are missed like school outings and sports. This can influence educational achievement and health outcomes. In New Zealand each year, there is at least \$6bn in additional health and education costs associated with child poverty, as well as reduced productivity.

Like many nations, New Zealand has come to a decision point of fundamental importance to how it understands itself as a nation: is child poverty accepted as unavoidable, or is child poverty preventable? If the latter is the case, then the task is to adopt a child-centred focus, find out what causes child poverty and well-being, and intentionally focus on reducing child poverty.

This presentation draws on the report and recommended actions of the Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty, established in 2012 by the New Zealand Children's Commissioner (see *Solutions to Child Poverty in New Zealand: Evidence for Action*. http://www.occ.org.nz/publications/child_poverty#final). The account highlights how finding the policy mix that will get results is needed, but not simple. Key questions are addressed:

- How can a country improve the circumstances of their most deprived children?
- How do you ensure your country is a great place to live for all your children?
- What does the evidence suggest are reasonable and priority actions to reduce child poverty?
- What is the role of education for solutions to child poverty?

Hundreds of New Zealanders, including children, provided advice to the Expert Advisory Group. Their views will be included in this presentation. Overall the message from communities, business and evidence was clear: action is needed, now. No child should experience severe and persistent poverty, least of all in 'the land of plenty'.

Speaker



Dr. Airini is Head of the School of Critical Studies in Education, The University of Auckland, New Zealand. She does research into equity issues in education and solutions. Airini has led national strategy and policy development in New Zealand, OECD and developing nations, and has worked for UNESCO. She was the sole education specialist invited by the New Zealand Children's Commissioner to join the 2012 Expert Advisory Group to plan actions to overcome child poverty in New Zealand.