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## **Time for Real Action in Budget for Low-Income Communities - Fairer Future Group Sets Out Seven-Point Plan of Action**

The Fairer Future group is calling on the Government to adopt a seven-point plan of action to support low-income New Zealanders facing the high cost of living.

Two weeks out from Budget 2022, the plan of action, set out in the 'Seven Steps for a Fairer Future', reflects the advocacy group's key priorities for the Government to create lasting change for people most in need.

"While the Government has taken some steps to lift incomes and improve the welfare system, significant change is still needed. The extreme hardships caused by the jump in living costs, show that it's time for sustained and concrete action that supports those in our community doing it the toughest," says Save the Children Advocacy Director and group spokesperson Jacqui Southey. "Our plan of action shares seven key actions that outline changes that will make a positive impact for New Zealand whānau and tamariki locked in poverty."

'Seven Steps for a Fairer Future' calls on the Government to increase core benefit levels to the standard of liveable incomes, with recent Fairer Future [research](#) describing what liveable incomes are in 2022. It proposes an increase to the minimum wage to the level of the living wage to catch up with the rising cost of living. It adds to these steps five policy changes: an increase in the Disability Allowance, a changing of 'relationship rules' in the welfare system, the removal of sanctions, the wiping of debt owed to the Ministry for Social Development, and improving supplementary assistance and urgent grants.

"We know what it takes to lift people out of poverty and to reduce the hardship and misery that people face in our welfare system. The reality is that the level of income in any household directly influences the standard of living that household can achieve", says Brooke Fiafia coordinator at Auckland Action Against Poverty, and another spokesperson for the Fairer Future collaboration. "Now it's time for the Government to do the right thing and level up the assistance for people on income support, given the surging cost of living and the struggles people have gone through during the pandemic."

Fairer Future has said the seven policy changes should be underpinned by a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and an acknowledgment that improved welfare will support a just transition to a low carbon economy.

Fairer Future's research released in March showed the lifts in income support announced in last year's Budget will still leave some families around \$300 short of what is needed every week to meet core costs to participate in society. Over 30 organisations from the Fairer Future network have signed on to support the seven step action plan

“This is a test of the kindness and wellbeing agenda,” added Southey. “ Budget 2022 provides an opportunity to transform the welfare system and guarantee everyone in New Zealand can access a liveable income.”

ENDS

**The Fairer Future collaboration** originally penned a letter, signed by around 75 organisations, calling for benefit levels to be lifted in advance of Christmas 2020. Since then it has campaigned for changes to the welfare system, including through updating numbers released by the Welfare Expert Advisory Group on what constitutes liveable incomes in 2022.

**Available for interviews:**

Jacqui Southey, Save the Children

Max Harris, ActionStation

Brooke Fiafia, Auckland Action Against Poverty

Bernie Smith, Monte Cecilia Housing Trust

Glenis Philip-Barbara, Children’s Commissioner Māori

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