



Media Statement

2 September 2010

### **Welfare Working Group extends time for public consultation**

The Welfare Working Group welcomes the contribution New Zealanders are making to the current debate about the benefit system and its timeframe is being extended to provide more opportunity for public feedback to be heard.

The Welfare Working Group was established by the Government in April to develop practical options for a more sustainable and effective welfare system, with a specific focus on identifying ways to reduce long-term benefit dependency while ensuring timely, effective and appropriate supports for people when they need them.

Welfare Working Group Chair Paula Rebstock said that there has been a lot of feedback on the issues paper released earlier this month.

“It is clear New Zealanders are interested and keen to engage in the consultative process”.

The issues paper set out what needs to be considered if New Zealand is to reduce long-term benefit dependency, get better outcomes for those who need welfare support, and ensure the benefit system is effective and sustainable. People can comment on the issues paper until 17 September.

The Minister for Social Development and Employment Paula Bennett has agreed to a request from the Welfare Working Group to extend the timeframe for its work. It will now deliver its final report in February 2011.

Ms Rebstock said the extended timeframe will give the Working Group more time to consider the views of wider New Zealand through submissions, online feedback and workshops through the remainder of this year.

“Feedback will also be sought on an Options Paper, which will be released in November,” Ms Rebstock said.



“The large and growing number of people currently on long-term benefit support should be of concern to all New Zealanders. The Working Group wants to take the time to engage more New Zealanders in its work.”

ENDS

For further information:

Janice Rodenburg

021 705301

Janice.rodenburg@vuw.ac.nz