



Media Statement

21 September 2010

New Zealanders provide feedback on the issues in the benefit system

New Zealanders have shown a keen interest in engaging with the Welfare Working Group on how to reduce long-term benefit dependency, get better outcomes for those who need welfare support, and ensure the benefit system is effective and sustainable.

Welfare Working Group Chair Paula Rebstock said over 200 online and hard copy submissions had been received on the Issues Paper released in August and there has also been valuable feedback through workshops and an online discussion forum.

The paper set out the many issues around long-term welfare dependency and obstacles to achieving better life and work outcomes for people on benefits.

Formal submissions on the Issues Paper closed on Friday, 17 September 2010 but the Welfare Working Group will continue to welcome comments and feedback as its work continues.

The Welfare Working Group is now analysing and considering the points raised and Ms Rebstock says this will inform the next stage of the process – the development of a paper on the options which will be released in November.

“There is a clear message from beneficiaries and wider New Zealand that people want to work and work is valued as a way to build a better future for individuals, their families and communities. However, we have also heard from people on the Sickness, Invalid’s and Domestic Purposes Benefits who do not feel they have enough support or encouragement to get back into work. These are issues that the next stage of the process must seek to address.”

Ms Rebstock said Welfare Working Group members will continue to talk to New Zealanders around the country throughout the next few months.

The Welfare Working Group is due to deliver its final report in February 2011. The timeframe has been extended to give the Working Group more time to consider the views of wider New Zealand.



“The benefit system provides support in two ways. The system provides people with income support if they are not in employment, and it helps people to find a job, where that is appropriate. But we have found there are significant issues in the way the current benefit system is operating. In many cases it is proving more disabling than enabling,” Ms Rebstock said.

ENDS

For media enquiries: Janice Rodenburg 021 705301

Information about the Welfare Working Group can be found at <http://ips.ac.nz/WelfareWorkingGroup/Index.html>.