

Poverty in New Zealand





CHiLD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

A/Prof Nikki Turner, University of Auckland
Health spokesperson , Child Poverty Action Group
Sept 2016

What is Poverty

Absolute poverty: A lack of resources for the bare minimum existence.

Relative poverty: Exclusion from the minimum acceptable way of life in one's own society because of inadequate resources. Often complex origins and solutions.

Why does childhood poverty matter?

Poverty in childhood affects their whole life

- affecting every health outcome
- educational outcome
- secure relationships
- future jobs and income



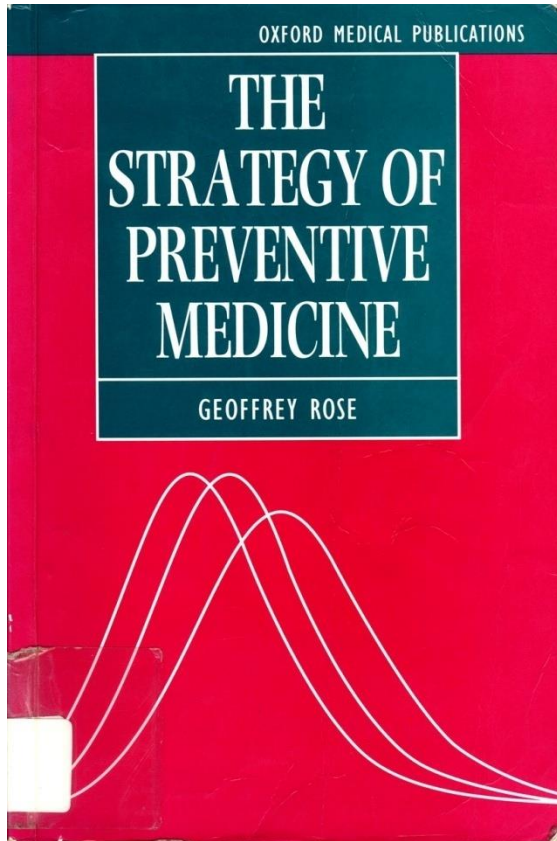
Poverty leads to poor health

"Income is the single most important determinant of health. There is a persistent correlation worldwide between low income and poor health."

The National Health Committee in its report to the MOH in June 1998

"Determinants of Health in New Zealand: Action to Improve Health"

Professor Sir Geoffrey Rose, 1992



"The primary determinants of disease are mainly economic and social, and therefore its remedies must also be economic and social."

"Medicine and politics cannot and should not be kept apart."

recognition



Juliette



- 7 months old
- Presents to GP on Monday morning
- Only 1 vaccination
- Admitted to hospital with pneumonia

- Solo mother, 17 years, one other sibling
 - No education past 14 years
 - History of physical/sexual abuse
 - Significant debt, Car repossessed
 - Very shy of authority figures – health, social services...
- Abusive partner, awol, drugs, criminal conviction
.....
- Moved 4 times since child is born
 - Currently with Aunty's whanau, 16 in house, cold, damp, smokers

Why does she get sick?

- Spread of the 'bug'
 - Overcrowded
 - Surrounded by other sick people
 - Hygiene – coughing, handwashing
- Weaker immune response
 - Stressed
 - Not fully immunised
 - Poor nutrition
- Reduced access to health care services
 - Mother knowledge level
 - Late presentation
 - Cost/access



Taking a life course approach to prevention



Picture: www.mailman.Columbia.edu



Jack is a 9 year old boy well know to my general practice. He has come in very many times to us and the local A & M with a range of health issues: *asthma, eczema, chest infections, skin infections, injuries.*

Since birth he has had TEN hospital admissions:
bronchiolitis (baby x2) asthma (x3), broken leg, head injury, cellulitis (x2), dental abscess

Jack is overweight, doing poorly at school, described by the school as having a learning difficulty. Furthermore the school are concerned because he is a playground bully.

His father is in jail. He has a brother and a sister and another died as an infant.

His Mum is 29 with a chronic medical condition. She has been in and out of a lot of jobs, never lasts more than a few months



WALK IN MY SHOES FOR A DAY...

Jack's future.....

- Poor health lifelong
- Obesity
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- School failure, limited occupational options
- Criminality
- Broken relationships
- Shorter life expectancy



knowledge





The Problem

80% agreed that child poverty is a problem in New Zealand

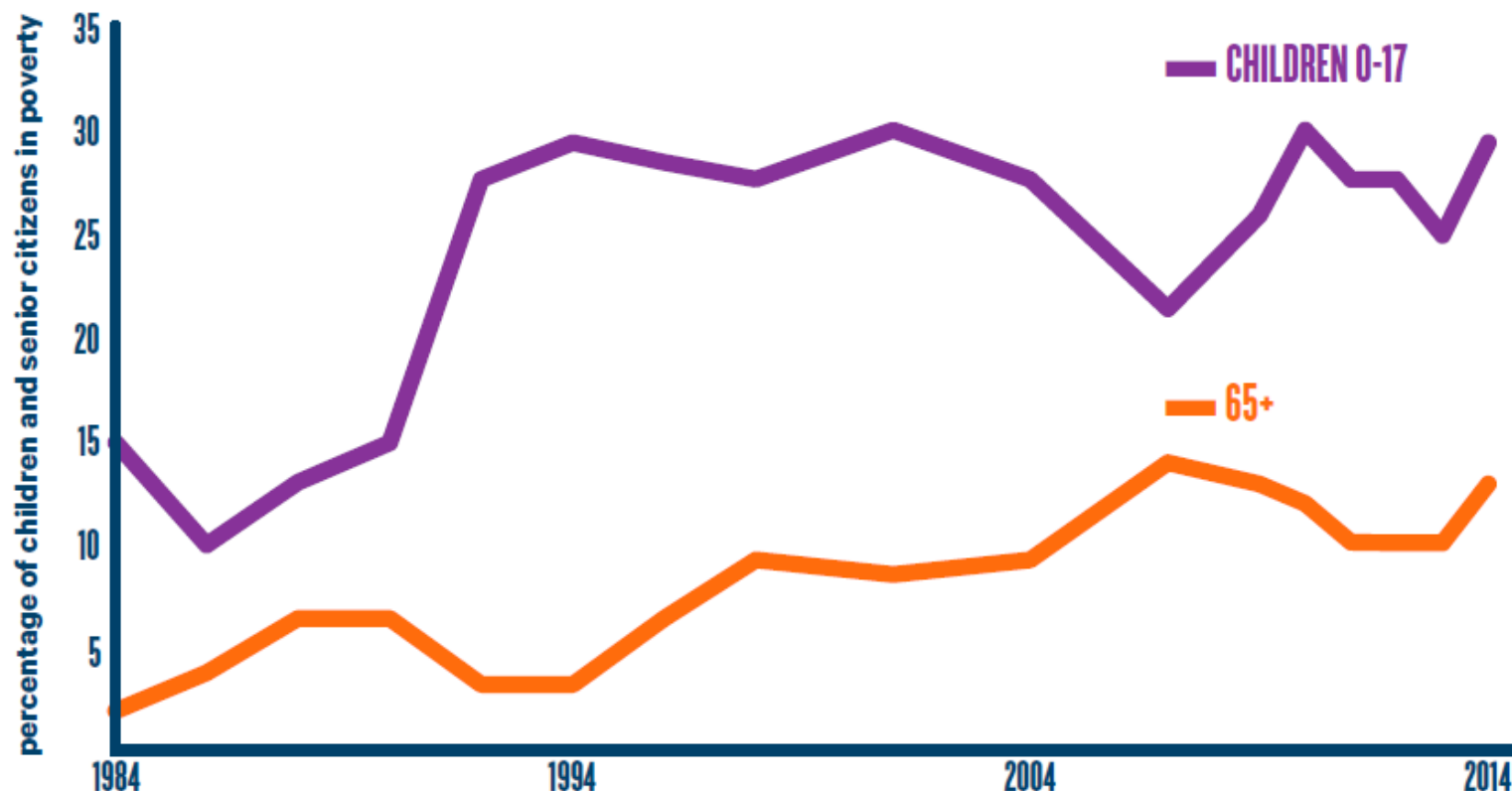
But the scale is underestimated:

Only eight percent thought the number of children in poverty was between 200,001 to 300,000

Half (49%) thought the number was less than 100,000

CHILD POVERTY IS MUCH WORSE THAN IN THE 1980S, REGARDLESS OF THE MEASURE YOU USE

KIWI CHILDREN LIVING IN POVERTY OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES COMPARED TO THOSE AGED 65+



CHILD POVERTY
IN 1984 WAS 15%

CHILD POVERTY
TODAY IS 29%

305,000
KIWI KIDS
LIVE IN
POVERTY

THAT'S
S.I.P.H.I
29%



Income Poverty

148,000 KIWI KIDS
GO WITHOUT THE THINGS
THEY NEED



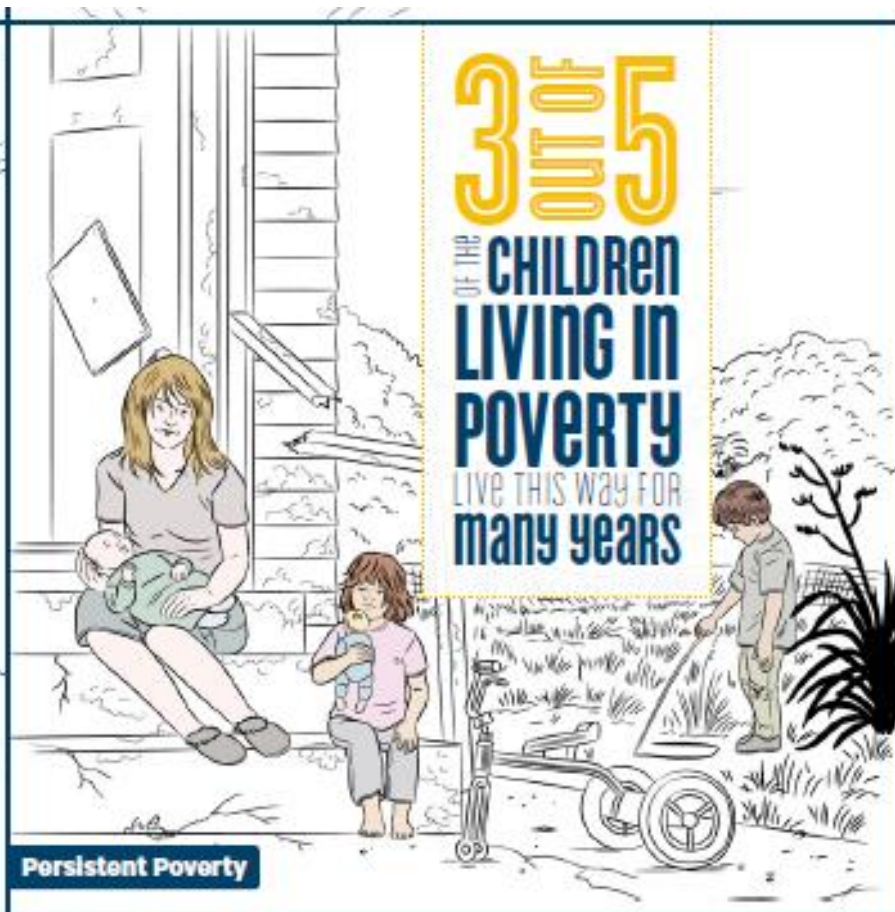
THAT'S
S.I.P.H.I
14%

Material Hardship

9% OF **KIWI KIDS** ARE AT THE **HARDEST END OF POVERTY**



3 OF 5
OF THE **CHILDREN**
LIVING IN
POVERTY
LIVE THIS WAY FOR
many years



Hospitalisation rates for serious bacterial infections and respiratory diseases

International Comparisons

Disease	Other OECD Countries Relative Rate	NZ Relative Rate
Rheumatic fever	1 (OECD)	13.8
Serious skin infections	1 (USA, Australia)	2
Whooping cough	1 (UK, USA)	5-10
Pneumonia	1 (USA)	5-10
Bronchiectasis	1 (Finland, UK)	8-9

Several Changes in Policy Adversely Affecting Incomes of Low Income Households With Children

- Low wages and relatively high taxes for the low paid.
- Family income support inadequate for low income families:
 - No indexing of family income support for 20 years (1989-2008).
 - 1991: The universal family benefit abolished.
- Beneficiary families treated very harshly:
 - 1991: Benefits cut by 21% and not restored relatively.
 - 1996: Child Tax Credit introduced excluding children of beneficiaries (2007 became Working for Families In Work Tax Credit)

Who is in most hardship in NZ?

	% in severe/significant hardship 2008
Children 0 – 17 years	23
18 – 24 years	15
25 – 44 years	16
45-64 years	13
65 + years	4
Overall	15

Adapted from: Perry B Non-income measures of material wellbeing and hardship: results from the 2008 New Zealand Living Standards Survey MSD Wellington Dec 2009. p, 22

Why has NZ has been so successful protecting older people from poverty?

We made income a priority with NZ Superannuation

- Universal - everyone gets it
- Simple & adequate
- Does not change with work status
- Does not reduce in hard times
- Linked to prices and wages (indexed)
- We don't judge

empathy

What does it mean to be poor?

- Your parents are stressed
- You are stressed
- You cant afford regular nutritious food
- You get sick more often
- You often live in a cold, crowded house
- Your neighbourhood has more crime
- You often have to shift house and school
- You can't participate in hobbies, sports

‘Multiple bee stings’



anger

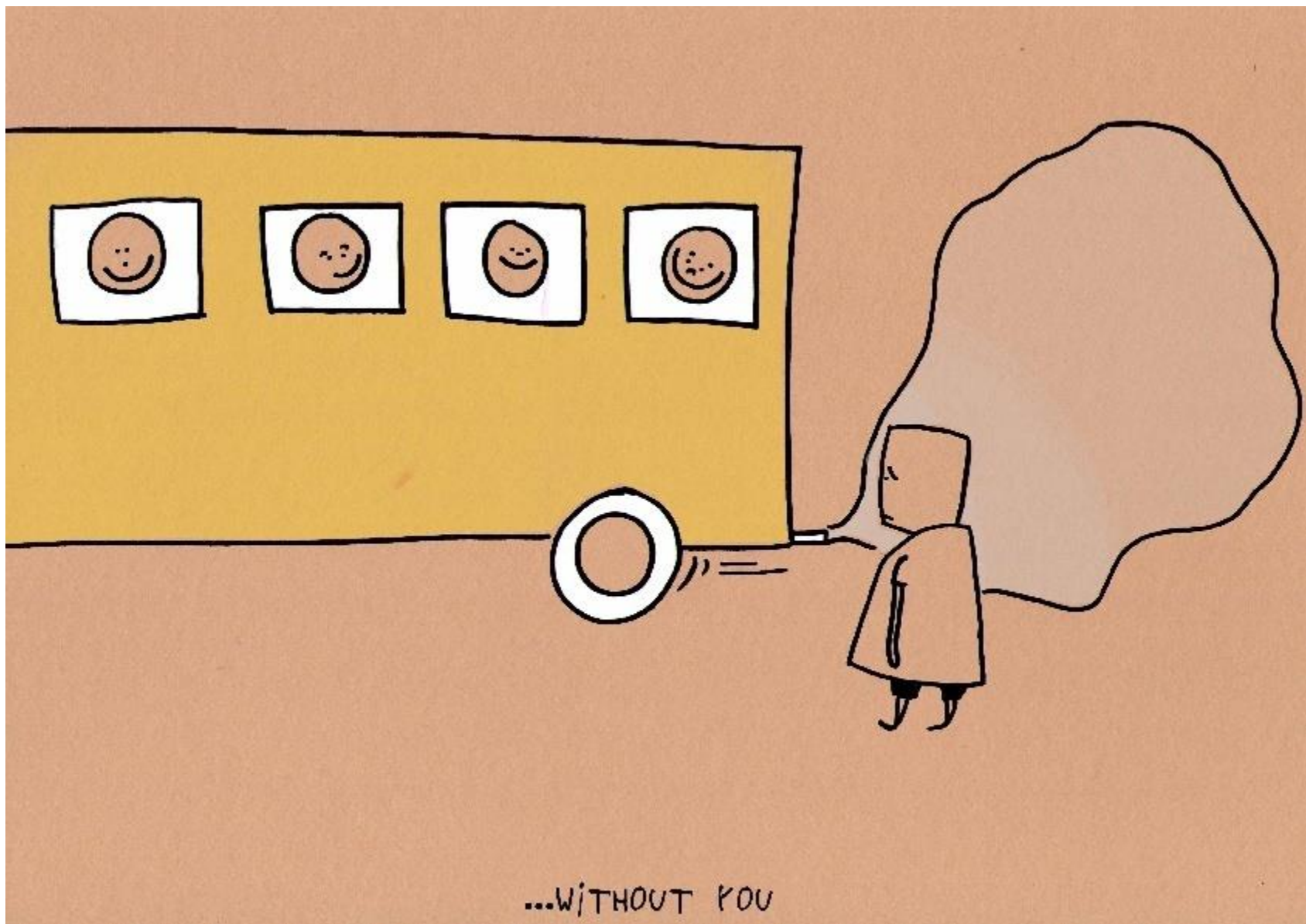
1 in 5 children

29%

305,000







action

Child poverty is not inevitable

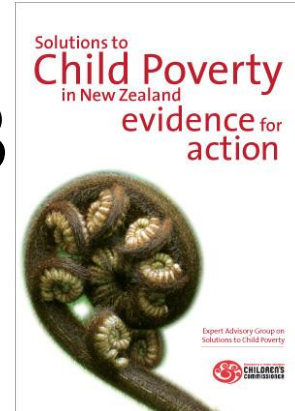
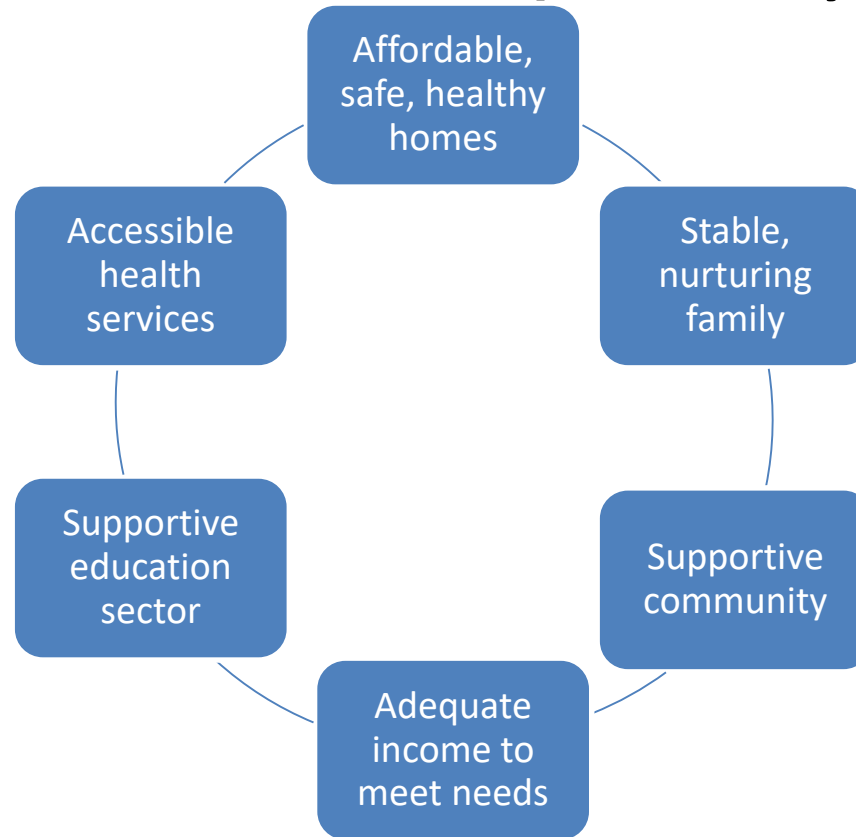
Child poverty has got worse in NZ since early 1990s

More children are poor in NZ than other age groups

Child poverty rates are affected by policy

- Child poverty is costly
- Child poverty can be reduced
- A multipronged approach is needed
- The first step is a strategic framework for addressing child poverty issues and ensuring accountability for outcomes. This includes the enactment of legislation requiring the measurement of child poverty, setting of short and long term poverty reduction strategiesmonitoring and regular reporting

Commissioner for Children: EAG solutions to child poverty 2013





Our children, our choice: priorities for policy

CHiLD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP

Some recommendations

- **Children's rights and needs at the centre of policy**
- **A comprehensive national plan with actions, targets, measurable outcomes and regular reporting**

Examples of specific recs:

- Universal health services for children, with targeted extra services based on assessment of further need
- A national housing plan
- A housing WOF
- Increase minimum wage and address the needs of children in low income families through well-supported benefits and tax credits
- Review social welfare benefits for adequacy
- Abolish sanctions which reduce the income of beneficiary families with children

THINGS COULD BE DIFFERENT, YOU KNOW...

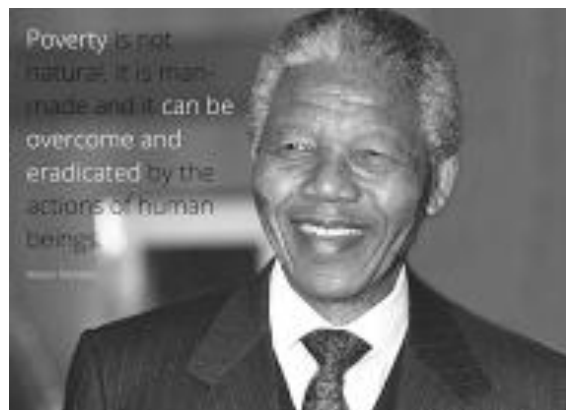


CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP AT CPAG.org.nz

collective action...

ActionStation
people powered change





#endpovertynz
actionaidnz.org.nz/endpovertynz



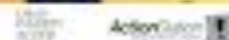
#endpovertynz
actionaidnz.org.nz/endpovertynz



#endpovertynz
actionaidnz.org.nz/endpovertynz



#endpovertynz



#endpovertynz



URGENCY to ACT

"Many things we need can wait. The child cannot. Now is the time his bones are being formed; his blood is being made; his mind is being developed. To him we cannot say tomorrow. His name is today."

Gabriela Mistral

Ehara tāku toa i te toa takitahi
ēngari he toa takimano e

*My strength is not mine alone,
but that of many*

