



He Mana tō ia Tamaiti
Every Child Counts

Media release

Date 16th September 2009

Number of pages: 3

Summit on Children and the Recession presents plan to Minister

Every Child Counts Summit on Children and the Recession presented a plan of action to the Minister of Housing, Hon Phil Heatley to address the well-being of children during the recession.

The plan included 42 recommendations, however the main recommendations, developed by 70 delegates who attended the Summit and presented to the government were:

1. Develop one strategic plan to promote innovation and productivity in the economy and equitable social redistribution that invests in children.
2. Set targets for the eradication of child poverty.
3. Invest in the development of families as units of learning together.
4. Implement Child Impact Assessments to avoid unintended consequences from policies.
5. Prioritise the period from conception to 24 months of age.
6. Increase core benefit levels to take reduce negative impacts on children and the economy.

“Many of our recommendations mirror those already made by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner, the OECD, UNICEF and many other organisations. Essential to the nation’s future is investment in the first three years of a child’s life. Research tells us that this is the most critical stage of a child’s development and yet compared to other countries in the OECD New Zealand’s investment in young children is poor,” said Murray Edridge, Chair of Every Child Counts.

“The community leaders who attended the Summit are seeing clear evidence of the impact of the recession on already poor families. They report an increase in poor child health and mental health. Young people who attended the Summit also told us that home life is becoming more difficult because of financial stress.

“We look forward to working with the government to implement the Summit recommendations that will mitigate the impact of the recession on children,” concluded Mr Edridge.

For more information contact

Murray Edridge
Chairperson, Every Child Counts
Phone (04) 385 7560 or 0274 851 896

Anton Blank 021 406 031

Every Child Count:
85 Ghuznee Street
Wellington
Phone (04) 385 7560
www.everychildcounts.org.nz

The Plan of Action

Every Child Counts convened the first ever Summit on Children and the Recession, on Wednesday 16 September 2009, at Te Karaiti Herenga Waka Marae, corner of Orly Rd and Waddon Place, Mangere.

Experts from around the country gathered at the Summit and worked in streams based around the following topics: Maaori, Social Exclusion, Family Violence, Education, Housing, Health and the Early Years.

Participants in the Summit recommend the following actions are taken to alleviate child poverty:

Develop one strategic plan to promote innovation and productivity in the economy and equitable social redistribution that invests in children.

Set targets for the eradication of child poverty.

Invest in the development of families as units of learning together.

Implement Child Impact Assessments to avoid unintended consequences from policies.

Prioritise the period from conception to 24 months of age.

Increase core benefit levels to take reduce negative impacts on children and the economy.

Other specific recommendations include:

The Early Years

1. Extend paid parental leave to 12 months and include flexible provisions so this support can be accessed in different ways.
2. Ensure new parents are taught how to soothe a crying infant as part of the Never Shake a Baby Campaign.
3. Raise the quality of early childhood care and education for under 3 year olds by improving teacher training.
4. Prioritise the 0-3 year olds in teach education, social worker education, the family court and other organizations.

Health:

1. Build on and broaden the Well Child Health Review, with the Prime Minister hosting a discussion on health in the conception to 24 month period.
2. Ensure that antenatal and postnatal education focus on child development.
3. Increase support for parenting education.
4. Reduce the cost of after-hours health care.
5. Invest in nutrition through food in schools.
6. Invest in social marketing that promotes a vision of the kind of nation we want to create, and the place of children in that.
7. Deliver universal, integrated services to families with children.

Maaori:

1. Develop a whole-of-whanau approach for funding and service delivery.
2. Ensure long-term investment that creates intergenerational change.
3. Promote collectivity
4. Sign up to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People and all clauses of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
5. Direct funding to problem areas such as tobacco, alcohol and gambling.
6. Develop practical steps to encourage Maaori into home ownership.

Education:

1. Implement Child Impact Assessments to avoid unintended consequences.
2. Improve coordination and communication between all government agencies working with families and children.
3. Re-establish the Training Incentive Allowance.
4. Increase access to education for the children of over-stayers.
5. Fund education services for their role in parent support and education.
6. Review and plan for smoother transitions for children between home, early childhood services and schools.
7. Ensure equity of access to childcare support.

Social Exclusion:

1. Invest in comprehensive improvements in maternal education to enable skills acquisition.
2. Facilitate school-to-work transitions with on the job training.
3. Ensure the full implementation of the recommendations from the Building Better Government Engagement process.

Family Violence:

1. Extend and expand the “It’s Not OK” campaign to include bystanders and children.
2. Enable local solutions to local problems through the local initiatives fund – SKIP and the Community Action Fund.
3. Invest in sustained, long-term solutions to address violence.
4. Evaluate and support those programmes that are working.
5. Educate and train health and education professionals about family violence issues to ensure children are supported.
6. Reward and support collaboration between agencies, including schools, community and parents.

Housing:

1. Create stability and healthy housing by using private landlords through tax rebates or dollar-for-dollar subsidies.
2. Establish local building societies that enable the building of good quality homes.
3. Ensure houses are built to meet standards that reduce energy consumption, are warm and healthy.