



He Mana tō ia Tamaiti
Every Child Counts

18 May 2006
Media statement
For immediate use

Budget 2006 ***Every Child Counts***

Budget 2006 places a strong emphasis on economic transformation to ensure New Zealand's competitiveness in the global economy. Clearly, children will play a pivotal role in the social and economic development that will underpin this competitiveness; children's well-being today is essential for tomorrow's economic success. So did this year's Budget place children firmly at the centre of the political agenda?

"There is certainly some good news for children and their families in Budget 2006," says *Every Child Counts* spokesperson Dr Ian Hassall, "but this is not a Budget that prioritises children's interests."

"We applaud the commitment to children's health, including the \$22m for the Meningococcal B immunisation campaign, the \$16m for universal newborn hearing screening, the \$4m for well-child health checks, and the \$76m for a national anti-obesity campaign."

"It is very pleasing to see the government's recognition of violence as a pervasive problem in New Zealand, and particularly its impact on children. We think the multi-level approach to prevention, and inclusion of community organisations in comprehensive plans is on the right track. Implementation of the Te Rito family violence prevention strategy, support for anti-bullying programmes in schools, consolidation of victim support and increased funding for non-government organisations who work toward prevention of violence have our support. In addition, we are very pleased to see the \$15m commitment to SKIP to promote non-physical discipline of children and the \$11.5m for an information campaign aimed at changing attitudes to family and community violence. However we are concerned that the \$9m for family violence prevention agencies, spread over four years, will not be nearly enough to enable the planned devolution of the bulk of child protection to community organisations."

"We are disappointed, however, to see no moves to alleviate poverty among children of beneficiaries, bearing in mind that so many of New Zealand's children are living in homes whose main source of income is a benefit."

“The comments we made about last year’s budget hold for this one too,” continues Ian Hassall. “It doesn’t sufficiently acknowledge that children are our most important human resource, and their development is essential to achieving the best possible social and economic outcomes for all New Zealanders.”

“What is needed is a social and economic environment that supports families and communities to nurture their children. That means a priority for all portfolios, whether it’s employment, transportation, justice, immigration, Treasury, whatever, needs to be attention to children’s interests. Someone in government needs to be responsible for representing children’s interests and ensuring we have coordinated investment in our young citizens. To do otherwise is short-sighted and risks the long-term sustainability of our nation.”

Every Child Counts is a coalition including Barnardos, Plunket, Save the Children, Unicef NZ and AUT’s Institute of Public Policy, supported by more than 350 other organisations and thousands of individual supporters.

The public are invited to demonstrate their support for the nation’s children by adding their names to the Every Child Counts campaign at: www.everychildcounts.org.nz.

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